DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 551 CS 510 468

TITLE	Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (83rd, Phoenix, Arizona, August 9-12, 2000). Mass Communication and Society Division.
INSTITUTION	Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
PUB DATE	2000-08-00
NOTE	374p.; For other sections of this proceedings, see CS 510 451-470.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC15 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Child Health; Content Analysis; Crime; Economic Factors; Family Structure; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Journalism Education; Journalism Research; *Mass Media Effects; Mergers; Newspapers; Periodicals; Political Campaigns; Programming (Broadcast); *Television; Violence
IDENTIFIERS	Clinton (Hillary Rodham); Economic Literacy; Korea; Letters to the Editor; Media Coverage; Michigan; Political Advertising; *Year 2000 (Programming)

ABSTRACT

The Mass Communication and Society Division section of the proceedings contains the following 12 papers: "Retreads: Recycling American Prime Time Television for Fun and Profit" (Chad Dell); "Partisan and Structural Balance of Election Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race in Michigan" (Frederick Fico and William Cote); "Newspaper Letters and Phone-Mail to the Editor: A Comparison of Reader Input" (Michael E. Dupre and David A. Mackey); "Economic Literacy and News Interest" (Lowndes F. Stephens); "Treating the Y2K Bug: Knowledge Gap Factors That Shaped the Outcome of a Public Issue" (Francesca R. Dillman Carpentier); "A Framing Analysis: How Did Three U.S. News Magazines Frame about Mergers or Acquisitions?" (Sang Hee Kweon); "Thinking about Health: The Relationship of Mass Media and Cognition to Perceptions of Children's Health" (Bryan H. Reber); "The Effects of News Stories That Put Crime and Violence into Context: Testing the Public Health Model of Reporting" (Renita Coleman and Esther Thorson); "Political Talk--Not All 'Hot Air': A Path Model Predicting Knowledge, Cynicism & Vote in an Issue Campaign" (Glenn Leshner and Maria E. Len-Rios); "An 'Improbable Leap'": A Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Hillary Clinton's Transition from First Lady to Senate Candidate" (Erica Scharrer); "The Impact of Political Advertising: Differences Between Positive Ads and Issue, Image and Mixed Attacks" (Sung Wook Shim); and "Pleasure, Reality, and Hegemony: A Television Drama and Women in a Korean Confucian Patriarchal Family Structure" (Oh-Hyeon Lee). (RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 447 551

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (83rd, Phoenix, Arizona, August 9-12, 2000). Mass Communication and Society Division.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

J. McGill

CS 510 468

Retreads:
Recycling American prime time television for fun and profit

by

Chad Dell, Ph. D
Department of Communication
Monmouth University
400 Cedar Avenue
West Long Branch, NJ 07764-1898
cdell@monmouth.edu
732/263-5192

Paper Presented in the Mass Communication and Society Division
of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication,
Phoenix, AZ, August 2000.

Abstract:

"Retreads"—the movement of programs from one broadcast network schedule to another—are a previously ignored form of television recycling. This essay accounts for the use of retreads over a fifty-year period: their initial popularity with networks and sponsors in the 1950s, their decline in the 1970s and '80s, and their resurgence in the 1990s. The essay establishes a typology of retreads, and offers evidence suggesting that retreads may be more successful than other program types. However, the networks' dependence on retreads and other types of program recycling deprives audiences of access to new voices and program ideas.

Retreads:

Recycling American prime time television for fun and profit

Abstract:

"Retreads"—the movement of programs from one broadcast network schedule to another—are a previously ignored form of television recycling. This essay accounts for the use of retreads over a fifty-year period: their initial popularity with networks and sponsors in the 1950s, their decline in the 1970s and '80s, and their resurgence in the 1990s. The essay establishes a typology of retreads, and offers evidence suggesting that retreads may be more successful than other program types. However, the networks' dependence on retreads and other types of program recycling deprives audiences of access to new voices and program ideas.

Retreads: recycling American prime time television for fun and profit

In the 1950s, ninety percent of the television audience regularly tuned in to just three television networks. Network program strategies allowed new programs time to develop an audience, while network chestnuts were kept on past their prime, still able to draw in a respectable audience share. Programs moved freely from one network to another, such as shows like Father Knows Best, which was successful on all three networks. By the mid-1960s, networks were reluctant to air another network's show, particularly if that program had failed.

The broadcasting landscape had changed markedly. With the expansion of satellite and cable television to full-fledged competitors, the emergence of rival broadcast networks FOX, UPN and The WB, and with computer video streaming quickly becoming viable, broadcast network programming strategies have changed. Programs are developed in a rush, and are rarely given the opportunity to find an audience before being hastily replaced by the next wave of quickly developed programs. And broadcasters are revitalizing a long-dormant programming strategy: networks once again have begun to scoop up programs that had appeared—and failed—on other networks.

A term that captures the flavor of this trend of network program recycling is "retread," a word used to describe a worn-out old tire that has been resurfaced with new tread. This essay utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods to describe and analyze the phenomenon of retreads, demonstrating that it is both a relatively common industry practice and one that has gained momentum in recent years.

The phenomenon of retreads has important consequences for our understanding of television broadcasting. Retreads are just one of a number of program recycling strategies that have persisted at the television networks and alienated their audiences. Society can no longer count on television as a dependable source of cultural materials which people can share with one another. This is not because of increased media competition, but because of the increasingly fragmented and recycled programming being offered. New programs are recycled from old program models; new series are often cancelled before they have the time to develop an identity; and one network's failed program ideas often appear as the next network's "new" program entries. Recycling limits the entry of new ideas into television's public arena, and encourages television programmers to rely on tired-yet-familiar programming, rather than allowing a diversity of voices to flourish. These strategies promote the fissure between television and the society it purports to serve. This paper defines and describes a particular type of television recycling—retreads—which thus far has escaped the attention of television scholars.

Recycling Television Programming

Broadcast television has demonstrated a long-standing interest in recycling program ideas. When commercial television was launched in the late 1940s, it borrowed liberally from radio, relying initially on the same sort of anthology and variety programs that were programming staples in radio's early days, such as the Original Amateur Hour and Kraft Television Theatre (Hilmes, 1997). Television also borrowed liberally from the stars that made up radio's constellation, luring entertainers such as Arthur Godfrey and Jack Benny to the visual medium. But like radio, television soon discovered the value of the episodic series such as I Love Lucy, The Goldbergs, Father Knows Best and Make Room for Daddy. By the 1958-59 season, nine of the top ten shows for the year that were ranked by the A. C. Nielsen Company were episodic narrative programs (McNeil, 1996, p. 1146).

The broadcast networks also have a long history of borrowing, stealing and recycling one another's hits and misses. One of the most familiar forms of program recycling is the "spin-off." Les Brown (1977) describes a spin-off as "a new program derived from an existing one" (p. 407). In their study of spin-offs, Bellamy, McDonald and Walker (1990) suggest that the most common type of spin-off involves the movement of supporting characters from another program. For instance, characters George and Louise Jefferson were moved from All in the Family to create the show The Jeffersons, while the Cheers character Frasier Crane was later used as the central focus for the program Frasier. Bellamy et al. (1990) identify two additional forms of spin-off. In the "situational" spin-off, the location and situational orientation of the original series are retained from the original (e.g. The Bionic Woman from The Six Million Dollar Man). Finally, in the "guest star spin-off," the lead characters of a new series are first introduced as guest stars in an existing program. For instance, Jake Hanson from Melrose Place first appeared in another Aaron Spelling property, Beverly Hills, 90210; the lead characters from Mork and Mindy were introduced on Happy Days. Bellamy et al. found that a total of 156 spin-offs had been created between 1956 and 1983. In comparing spin-offs to programs without a direct connection to a popular series, they found that spin-offs were more successful in terms of the ratings they garnered. This suggests that, though it may breed contempt among some viewers, in television programming, familiarity breeds success as well.

While a spin-off transfers portions of a narrative world from one series to the next, Gitlin (1985) points out that a "copy" simply replicates the formula of an existing program. As is often the case in television, the year after a new series meets with success, the networks quickly act to clone it, in hopes of cashing in on its popularity. NBC's 1994 hit series Friends spawned its share of imitations, including The Crew, Misery Loves Company, First Time Out and Partners. None came close to matching the success of the original.

Gitlin (1985) identifies another form of television recycling, which he terms “recombinants”: the transformation and combination of existing formulas into new narrative contexts. For instance, the program St. Elsewhere combined multiple genres—soap opera, cop show and medical drama—while stylistically borrowing heavily from the hit drama Hill Street Blues. Gitlin points points out that St. Elsewhere was pitched to NBC programmers as “Hill Street in the Hospital” (p. 76). The result is neither wholly new nor entirely derivative of previous shows, but contains the best (or worst, depending on your perspective) characteristics of each.

Retreads stand apart from other methods of borrowing or stealing from previous programs because a retread is the wholesale movement of the entire program—title, concept, and cast—from one network to another. In this sense, it is the purest form of television recycling. A show that demonstrates the many different ways a single series can be retreaded is the classic 1950s family comedy Father Knows Best, which jumped between two different media and three different networks in its lifetime. The show began as a radio series on NBC in 1949, with Robert Young in the starring role. The television version of the program had its debut on CBS in the fall of 1954, with Young the only cast member to make the transition from radio. Sponsored by P. Lorillard Co., the show aired at 10 p.m. Sunday evening. The series was not terribly successful, initially attracting a modest 26 share of the audience, and faltering below that for much of the season (“Are Sponsors,” 1955). Unable to get an earlier time slot from CBS for what was arguably a “family” program, Lorillard dropped the series in March, 1955.

NBC included the series as part of its 1955-56 schedule, placing it in an 8:30 p.m. time period, and lining up Scott Paper as its new sponsor. The program performed markedly better in its new home and time slot, garnering consistently higher ratings. By its third (and last season) at NBC, the series was ranked 23rd overall by Nielsen (Brooks & Marsh, 1988).

In September 1958, Father Knows Best moved back to CBS, still sponsored by Scott Paper. In its last two seasons of original episodes, the program continued to build an audience, finishing the 1959 season ranked 6th overall in the ratings. Having performed the character for eleven years, Robert Young announced in 1960 that he was leaving the series at the height of its popularity. Still, the program continued on; CBS aired reruns of the series in prime time for two more years, through September 1962. The program made its final network jump that fall, as ABC added the series to its prime time schedule, rerunning old episodes of the program for another year, and continued to air the program in daytime segments through 1967.

Father Knows Best illustrates in microcosm the range of shifts that can occur with a single prime time narrative program. In all, the series shifted back and forth between three different networks and two different broadcast media over the course of its fourteen year prime time history.

Method

This paper examines the use of retreads as a program strategy by the broadcast television networks in the United States. To establish the history and strategic use of retreads, I performed a content analysis of two of the leading guides to American network television programming: The complete directory to prime time network TV shows by Tim Brooks and Earl Marsh (1999), and Alex McNeil's Total television (1996). Brooks and Marsh's work provides a census of prime time programming appearing on the American broadcast networks between 1946 and 1999;

McNeil's guide offers a census of both prime time and daytime network programs offered between 1948 and 1996.

Examining the more than 5,500 program entries in these resources, I tracked all programs that had moved from one broadcast television network to another. The population of programs runs from the 1948-49 season—the first season of regular commercial network prime time operations—through the 1997-98 season, providing a clear view of fifty years of programming decisions. The broadcast networks included in the census were ABC, CBS, NBC, DuMont, FOX, UPN and The WB. Each series was classified according to genre—situation comedy, drama, variety, quiz, news, etc., using the categories set out in Brooks and Marsh (1999).

Content analysis was used to identify 293 programs that had moved from one network to another during any daypart (prime time, daytime, late night). I added 11 additional programs that began in syndication before being picked up by a network for national distribution. Each of these 304 programs was coded for: 1) the show title, 2) the program's genre; 3) the month and year the program was added, and then removed, from the schedule; 4) the network on which the program appeared; 5) the daypart in which the program was scheduled. The final three categories were repeated each time the series moved to a new network, or was renewed by its existing network.

The population was then pared down further. Programs that did not appear on two or more networks in prime time were eliminated (67), to concentrate solely on prime time programming decisions. Non-narrative prime time programs (119) were removed from consideration for two primary reasons. First, many of the non-narrative programs were based on a single star entertainer or persona, such as Jackie Gleason or Milton Berle. Because these entertainers had only themselves and their staffs to worry about, they could more easily move from network to network. On the other hand, a narrative program has more of a creative identity of its own (having been fashioned by a team of writers, producers, directors and actors), and that identity might more directly be associated with an individual network. Thus it takes more impetus to move a narrative program from network to network. Concentrating solely on fictional series television also allows for comparisons to be drawn to other types of recycled programming, such as the research on spin-offs by Bellamy, McDonald and Walker (1990).

The prime time narrative program group, comprised of 118 programs that qualify as retreads, forms the purposive sample on which this study is based. By subjecting the sample described here to qualitative and historical analysis, this study explores the following questions:

RQ1: How prevalent has the strategy of retreads been in television's history?

RQ2: How can changing trends in retread use be explained, based on our knowledge of business practices and broadcast history?

Finally, the study examines the different types of retreads and offers a typology of this strategic practice.

Findings

As should already be clear, retreads are *not* a new practice, but their popularity as a programming strategy has varied over time. The group of programs studied here changed hands a total of 145 times over the course of their history: fourteen series switched between three different networks, while another nine programs moved back and forth multiple times between two networks. The yearly breakdown of narrative programs that moved to a new network in prime time (Figure 1) demonstrates that the use of retreads was most popular in commercial television's early years. In the first ten years of full commercial network operations between 1948 and 1957, 66 shows shifted to a new network. Twelve narrative programs changed hands in 1952 alone, while another ten series moved in 1957. In fact, the heaviest concentration of retreads occurred in the first 15 years (between 1948 and 1962), when 96 of the 145 program shifts from network to network occurred, accounting for two-thirds of the total.

Viewed in ten-year increments, the practice of using retreads declined markedly over the first four decades, but rebounded significantly in the final decade of the study (see Figure 2). From a high of 66 between 1948 and 1957, retread use drops consistently over the next three decades to a low of only seven. However, in the final decade of the study, 23 retreads appeared in network schedules, a gain of nearly 330 percent. As a programming strategy, then, the use of retreads has regained some of its luster in recent years.

Examining the length of time a series remained on the schedule of the network on which it made its debut was useful for establishing a typology of retreads. Using the debut and cancellation dates for each series listed in Brooks and Marsh (1999) and McNeil (1996), I tracked the longevity of each series at each network on which it appeared. Of the 118 narrative series that became retreads, 52 programs lasted for 12 months or less on their network of origin before being cancelled and subsequently moving on to a new network (see Figure 3). Thus nearly half of all narrative retreads—44 percent of the total—were cancelled after a season or less on the air. Another 24 programs lasted between 12 and 23 months on their initial network. These 76 programs, which I have termed "As New" retreads, subsequently were scheduled by other networks for a cumulative total of 114.08 years over the prime time life-span of these series, an average of 1.5 years.

The remaining 42 programs continued on the air of the originating network for two or more years before cancellation. These programs, which I describe as "Extended Life" retreads, remained on the air an average of 4.34 years before being cancelled and picked up as a retread by a new network. (Additionally, six "As New" programs, which were cancelled in under two years, then achieved 2 or more years of longevity as an "Extended Life" program, before moving on to yet another network.) After cancellation, these 48 programs had their lives extended by other networks an average of 2.2 years each.

If some programs experienced second (and third, and fourth) lives on other networks, adding to their longevity, some programs were used for other purposes. Of the total population of narrative retreads, 30 programs were repeated in prime time solely as reruns by other networks. While most programmers avoided using reruns during the crucial November and February "sweeps" ratings periods, I found six programs scheduled as such. (Not surprisingly, these programs were used by networks during periods of economic struggle: one by DuMont in 1953 and five by ABC between 1955 and 1962.) Reruns, not surprisingly, had a short shelf life on prime time, lasting an average of .38 years on the air.

Many retread reruns fall into the category I describe as "Plugs:" programs that move to a new network with only minimal expectations. Programmers use plugs to fill a temporary hole in a schedule, but have minimal intentions of testing the potential of the program. Some 33 retreads are categorized as plugs; most are inserted into the schedule after the conclusion of the February ratings period, and like the use of most reruns, none are continued beyond October, or into the crucial November sweeps month. In fact, 24 of the 33 plugs were also reruns.

Discussion: The 1950s

The trends in the use of retreads by the networks make sense when seen in historical context. To begin with, the heavy dependence on retreads in the 1950s is easily understood in light of the industry's business practices of the period. One immediate problem facing the four networks (ABC, NBC, CBS and DuMont) in the initial years of commercial operation was the need for significant amounts of programming. Each of the networks also operated individual television stations, and each station owner was bound by Federal Communication Commission rules to maintain a program schedule of not less than 28 hour per week ("FCC Extends," 1947). To achieve the goal of providing programming both to their own stations and to station affiliates, the networks initially followed the business model used by the radio networks, selling air time in 30 and 60 minute blocks, and leaving it up to advertisers and their agencies to provide the programming.

Advertisers and agencies viewed network time slots as franchises, as investment opportunities to be established and protected. Many advertisers began to experiment with television sponsorship without proof of its immediate profitability, because they felt that getting in on the ground floor of this new medium would guarantee them a choice time slot when television became viable. A 1946 article in Sponsor magazine argued that the "number one" reason for advertisers to participate in television was the potential for preferential treatment in the future: "(T)aking a chance now will assure the chance taker, if he [sic] keeps at it, of tying onto a preferred time period in the future" ("Television and," p. 26). Though participation would not guarantee a particular time spot, it was assumed that early support of the fledgling television networks would be rewarded over time.

Sometimes a sponsor would move a program from a weak network to a more powerful rival once their program was well-established. For instance, the prestigious anthology drama The U.S. Steel Hour began on television with a two-year run on ABC starting in 1953. In 1955 the program moved to the more powerful CBS network, where it stayed another eight years. While the program never cracked the top thirty in terms of its popularity, CBS' reputation and overall popularity with audiences no doubt contributed to U.S. Steel's decision to move the program.

The networks played an equally active role in building program schedules, in part by taking programs away from other networks. In particular, as individual shows and entertainers demonstrated their appeal with audiences, the major networks (NBC and CBS) began luring talent away from their weaker competitors. One of the most dramatic instances of a shift in the fortunes of a program occurred with the 1950s situation comedy icon Make Room for Daddy, starring Danny Thomas. The series began on ABC in 1953, though its ratings were unexceptional at the struggling network. In its three-year tenure at ABC, the series was twice moved to different days in the prime time schedule, and never broke out of the pack. The program moved to CBS in the fall of 1957. Renamed The Danny Thomas Show, the series climbed dramatically to #2 in the overall Nielsen ratings for the year, and stayed in the top 12 for the next seven years at CBS. The move to a more powerful network had a positive impact on the program's popularity.

Conversely, the weaker networks bought their share of retreads in the 1950s, and turned some of them into success stories. For instance, Leave it to Beaver lasted only a single season on CBS in 1957. The series moved to ABC the following year, where it became a programming mainstay, lasting five more seasons at the network. Though the program would never break into Nielsen's annual top 30, it would live on (in daytime reruns) as a memorable example of the 1950s family sitcom.

By the middle of the decade, program schedules began to fill more easily, and the networks took an increasingly active role in scheduling particular shows. Advertisers discovered that their franchises were not nearly as safe as they had once believed. Much to their chagrin, sponsors found that the networks were increasingly interested in ratings performance, and shows that did not meet network expectations were cancelled. Even sponsors that had supported the fledgling television networks when there were few television sets to receive the broadcasts found that their shows were no longer safe. Such was the case with NBC's The Voice of Firestone, a musical program that began on radio in 1928. Firestone had willingly supported NBC's initial television efforts, beginning in 1943 with sponsorship of an experimental film program, and continuing with a television simulcast of its flagship musical program in 1949. However, as competition for audiences increased in the mid-fifties, NBC dropped Voice from its schedule in 1954 because of lagging ratings, despite its twenty five-year affiliation with Firestone. The sponsor moved the program to the weaker ABC network the following season, but its ratings continued to decline, and ABC eventually cancelled the program in 1959. Sponsors such as Firestone discovered that the franchise concept was no longer being honored by the networks, which were increasingly taking control over programming decisions ("Year End Report," 1954).

The 1960s: Decline

The active role that powerful sponsors initially played in television programming decision-making contributed to the significant number of programs that moved from network to network in prime time in the 1950s. By the beginning of the 1960s, however, most programs were now fully under the control of the networks. Few advertisers could afford to remain exclusive sponsors of a prime time series, and the networks now exercised complete authority over their schedules (see "TV Programming," 1959). Interestingly, the use of retreads declined markedly during this period. Whereas an average of six narrative programs changed networks each year between 1958 and 1962, in the next five years the average would drop to 1.6 per year. Still, while retreads were used much more selectively, they still had value for network programmers. For instance, while My Three Sons was one of only two retreads in the 1965 season, the series proved to have a lot of life left in it. Begun on ABC in 1960, the program scored in the top 15 among Nielsen's highest rated series in 1960, 1961 and 1964. The series moved to CBS in 1965, where it ended the year ranked 15th overall. It stayed among the top 25 from 1967 through 1970 and remained part of the CBS lineup through 1972, earning it the distinction of being the longest running family comedy on prime time television (Brooks & Marsh, 1999).

However, My Three Sons would prove to be the last retread to last more than two years with a second network until the late 1980s. Of the programs that shifted networks after 1965, only Get Smart showed any promise. The program had done reasonably well for NBC, earning top-25 finishes in its first two seasons (1965 and 1966), but its ratings declined thereafter, and NBC dropped the series in 1969. Looking for a strong comedy to fill a key gap in its program schedule, CBS added the program to its 1969 lineup, at the urging of Mike Dann, the network's senior vice president in charge of programming (Lewis, 1970). (Dann had been responsible for CBS's success with My Three Sons two years previously.) CBS milked the program for another season, but without much success.

Retreads Go Flat

As a programming strategy, the use of retread declined to its lowest point in the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1968 and 1977, only eleven narrative series changed hands. And this number might have been lower were it not for the fact that ABC deposed CBS as the top network during the 1976 season, with its brand of fantasy and sexually titillating programming. The following season, CBS picked up two shows from ABC—The Tony Randall Show and Wonder Woman—

in hopes of capitalizing on ABC's success. Third-placed NBC also got into the act, grabbing up The Bionic Woman from ABC. Only CBS's Wonder Woman lasted a second season.

Only seven narrative series changed hands among the networks between 1978 and 1987. Among the few programs that shifted networks was the award-winning program Taxi, which had its debut on ABC in 1978. Despite earning consistent critical praise, the series was never a ratings success for the network, and ABC dropped it after four seasons in 1982. NBC picked up the series, plugging it into its old Thursday night time slot while loudly promoting it with the slogan, "Same time, better network!" It lasted only one season.

Retread Redux

Since 1988, the use of retreads has been increasing steadily. A total of twenty-three series shifted networks between 1988 and 1997 (the last year of this study). And the decade of the nineties again saw evidence of retreads that yielded multiple-year success for the network taking over the program. In the Heat of the Night, the television version of the Academy Award-winning 1967 motion picture, began as a mid-season replacement program on NBC in the spring of 1988, yet still managed to place 19th overall for the 1987-88 season. The series continued to do well for NBC, placing in the top 20 the following two seasons before dropping off in the ratings. NBC cancelled the series after four full seasons, and CBS quickly picked it up in 1992. Although it was not a huge ratings success for CBS, the program won its time slot for the year in 1993-94, and performed well during its two years on the network's schedule.

Another of NBC's 1992 rejects did much better for ABC. Matlock, featuring long-time television star Andy Griffith, began a six-year run on NBC in 1986, and consistently earned top 20 rankings through the 1990 season. When NBC dropped the program in September 1992, ABC picked it up in time for the November rating period. While it didn't duplicate its prior ratings success, Matlock was used as a replacement program for three more seasons by ABC before the series was retired in 1995.

Part of the increasing popularity of retreads as a program strategy is due to the introduction of two new broadcast networks during the 1990s: UPN and The WB. These networks together picked up five cast-off programs since their respective debuts in 1995. Of the five, Sister, Sister showed the most longevity. While the series lasted only a single season on ABC, when it was introduced in 1994 as part of the network's package of teen-oriented programs, the show was given a second life on The WB, which added it to its schedule in 1995. The series lasted another three years at the fledgling network.

One of the most notable retread successes of the nineties was experienced by the veteran network CBS, which added the drama JAG to its lineup as a replacement program in January of 1997. The program had had its debut on NBC in 1995, which dropped it after only one season. But NBC's loss has been CBS's gain. CBS has continued to feature the series as part of its prime time schedule through the 2000 television season. As one of five programs finding a new network home in 1997, JAG demonstrates the continued popularity and viability of retreads as a network program strategy.

Categorizing the Practice: Types of Retreads

Over the fifty-year history of retreads, three distinct categories or types of retreads stand out: "Plugs," "As New" and "Extended Life." The first category refers to shows used simply to fill short-term programming gaps. The last two categories describe retreads in terms of the length of time a program remains on a source network before moving to a new network.

Plugs

Desperation, cynicism, or just calculated business strategy accounts for the first category of retreads. "Plugs" are defined as programs added to the schedules of a second network for the sole purpose of filling a short-term hole in the program schedule. This is particularly evident during what networks believe to be the ratings-poor summer months, when networks will seemingly program anything to keep the schedule filled. Perhaps the most egregious use of a plug was with The Charlie Farrell Show, which first appeared for three months on CBS in 1956 as a summer replacement for I Love Lucy. Reruns of the series reappeared the following summer on NBC, and were shown a third time by CBS during the summer of 1960.

As the practice of recording programs on film and videotape flourished in the late 1950s, "Plugs" became an increasingly popular programming strategy. For instance, ABC snapped up three shows from its competitors toward the end of the 1959/60 season: Johnny Stacatto and Steve Canyon from NBC, and Hey Jeannie from CBS. All three were subsequently cancelled in September. For executives at ABC, these shows merely represented opportunities to plug gaps in the summer schedule, and buy time before the more competitive and profit-centered fall season began.

Many of the retreads used in the 1960s and '70s were "plugs" used to get the networks through the summer doldrums, or to otherwise fill holes in the programming schedule. As a programming strategy, the use of plugs drops significantly in the last two decades studied, to two during 1978-87, and three during the 1988-97 period. This drop is not surprising. As Lewine, Eastman and Adams (1985) argue, the broadcast networks' precipitous decline in audience share at the hands of cable and other competitors prompted the networks to increase summer program budgets in the early 1980s. Still, as ABC's use of the NBC series Something So Right at the end of the 1997-98 season demonstrates, plugs continue to be a weapon in the programmer's arsenal.

As New

Some network programs barely have a chance to establish an audience before they are yanked unceremoniously from the host's schedule. While most of these programs remain in the discard pile, some are picked up by another network and given a second (or even third) try at success. An "As New" retread is a program that spent less than two full years on one network's schedule before it switched to a new network home. Seventy-six of 118 programs in the sample fall into the "As New" category, comprising 64 percent of the total. Close to half of all retreads (52 programs, or 44 percent) lasted a year or less before finding a home at a second network. Another 24 programs (20 percent) lasted up to 23 months.

One of the first "As New" retreads to change hands was They Stand Accused, which lasted only five months on CBS's schedule during the 1948-49 season before it was pulled from the network in May. The following fall, DuMont added the series to its 1949 schedule. The show stayed at DuMont for five years. Another early entry, Treasury Men in Action, stayed at ABC only three months before being cancelled in December 1950. The following April, NBC added the show to its prime time schedule, where it stayed for three years. The series was ranked among the top 30 shows in 1952 and 1953.

The "As New" retread strategy accounts for the success of a number of television's most enduring family situation comedies. Among these is Father Knows Best, which lasted only a single season on CBS before cancellation in 1955. NBC apparently recognized the value of the show, and gave it three more years. The program was ranked 23rd by the Nielsen Company in 1957.

"As New" programming is the dominant form of retread in the last decade of this study, accounting for 13 of 23 retreads between 1988 and 1997. Increasingly, networks are picking up programs that have been hastily rejected by the competition. Of the 13 "As New" programs exchanged, four of them have lasted more than a single season at their new homes. Sister, Sister remained at The WB for three seasons after the program was cancelled by ABC in its first year; and JAG has proven to be an enduring success for CBS since the program was dropped by NBC in 1996. Both programs are evidence that the "As New" retread can yield positive results for network programmers willing to take a chance on other networks' presumed failures.

One way to estimate the success or failure of a program is through longevity. The longer a program is continued by a network, the more confidently we can describe it as successful, at least in that network's estimation. The 76 "As New" programs were scheduled for an average of 1.5 years on their new networks. However, that number includes "As New" retreads that were used as reruns, where there is no hope of achieving long-term success. When reruns are removed from the equation, the remaining 58 "As New" programs lasted an average of 1.8 years beyond their initial cancellation. Furthermore, breaking the "As New" category down further into programs that lasted less than one year (52) compared with those that lasted between 1 and 2 years (24), the latter group performed considerably better. The 1-2 year old "As New" programs remained for 2 full seasons on subsequent networks' schedules.

"As New" Retreads did not perform as well as the spinoffs studied by Bellamy, McDonald and Walker (1990), which achieved an average run of 2.4 seasons. Still, Blum and Lindheim (1987) argue that, of the new series that have their premiere in a given season, a scant few will return for a second year; viewed in this light, the success rate of the "As New" retread looks tempting indeed. Stated another way, twenty-nine of all "As New" retreads went on to last more than a year at their new networks. If this is a measure of success, then 38 percent of "As New" programs were successful.

Extended Life

If an "As New" retread is cancelled early in its life span, the "Extended Life" retread represents a program with considerable mileage already on it. The "Extended Life" retread is a narrative series that is cancelled after two or more full seasons of use, and then picked up by a new network. Often the series has appeared on the air for considerably longer than two years, and is thought to have outlived its usefulness by the parent network. However, another network picks up the cancelled series in the belief that the program still has some extra mileage on it. The average life-span for the programs as a group was 4.32 seasons, an enviable figure. Forty-eight programs fall into the category of "Extended Life"—42 series appeared for two or more years on the network where they first appeared, while an additional 6 programs began as "As New" programs, achieving their success only after having moved to a second network.

The "Extended Life" definition accounts for CBS's use in 1958 of Father Knows Best, the program it lost to NBC three years earlier. After NBC achieved some success with the series, the program moved back to CBS, where it aired for another four years (including two seasons of reruns). ABC extended the life of the series even further after CBS dropped it, airing reruns in prime time during the 1962 season. In all, the two networks got another five years of "Extended Life" out of the program.

In the 1990s, both CBS and ABC picked up programs that had enjoyed successful runs at NBC before the network dropped them in 1992. In the Heat of the Night, which had appeared on NBC's prime time schedule for four years, was optioned by CBS after NBC cancelled the series, where it got another two years out of the program. Similarly, ABC picked up NBC's eight-year veteran Matlock, milking the program for another three seasons.

The durability of the "Extended Life" series is not measured in terms of its tenure with an originating network, but rather its longevity as a retread once it has moved on to other network homes. An examination of the 48 "Extended Life" retreads (after their respective jumps from their originating networks) reveals that their life-span was continued for an average of 2.2 additional seasons. When the seven reruns and "plugs" (discussed below) are removed from the population, the remaining 41 programs continued for an average of 2.5 seasons, besting the performance of spinoffs described by Bellamy et al. (1990). Again, if success is framed in terms of lasting more than one season on a network, then 25 of the 48 "Extended Life" retreads—52 percent—were successful. Given these numbers, it is not entirely surprising that some networks prefer to schedule a well-known if aging program from another network, rather than take a chance on a new but unproven series.

Conclusion

Much like spin-offs, copies, and other forms of programming recycling, the use of retreads has been a prominent strategy by network programmers. While retreads were most heavily used in the first two decades of commercial television's history, their resurgence in the 1990s speaks to their importance as a competitive tool. Examining the strategy across narrative television's prime time history, this study makes clear that "plugs," "as new" and "extended life" retreads each serve a particular function in the programmer's arsenal. Plugs are used strategically to provide short-term solutions to programming deficits. As new and extended life retreads represent opportunities to capitalize on overlooked programming properties. This typology offers broadcast researchers a theoretical framework through which we can understand and explore retreads as a strategic programming instrument.

If longevity alone is a measure of success, then 38 percent of "As New" retreads and 52 percent of "Extended Life" retreads were successful. Given the traditional failure rate for new series, which Head & Sterling (1990) posit stands at 75 percent, retreads appear to be a logical alternative to the risk associated with unknown programming. However, the detrimental influence of this strategy is also important to recognize. The increasing dependence on retreads and other forms of program recycling is crowding out new voices and program ideas, as evidenced by the startling lack of African Americans on the major networks in 1999, and the continued absence of Asian, Hispanic and Native American voices anywhere on network television.

This study is a preliminary exploration of the efficacy of retreads compared with other types of prime time programming. Future research should incorporate ratings, shares data, and detailed program scheduling information to determine the success of the retread strategy. Such studies should utilize a sophisticated system for establishing the "success" or "strength" of a program such as that used by Adams (1997) in his study of scheduling practices based on audience flow. This type of research would more clearly establish the strategic effectiveness of retreads.

It should not be surprising that the use of retreads has increased in the last decade. Broadcast networks' audience share has been in steady decline. Faced with mounting competition from cable and satellite sources, along with new pressures from computer content providers, broadcast networks continue to seek out blockbuster programming that sets them apart from the rest. As Becker (1999) demonstrates, networks have also increasingly used brand identity to distinguish their programming from that of their competitors: witness NBC's "Must See TV" campaign of urban situation comedies, or ABC's "TGIF" family sitcoms. The philosophy of brand identity would seem to encourage networks to pick up failed shows that fit within their brand concept, as NBC did in the case of The Naked Truth, or The WB did by integrating Sister, Sister into its schedule of African American-centered programs. The fact that a series failed on another network is less important in these instances than its "fit" with the brand image that a network has built.

In the wake of deregulation by Congress and the FCC, and in light of the latest spate of corporate mergers which have joined broadcasters to film studios, networks have increased their program production capacity. Studios are now providing series both for their own networks' schedules and those of their competitors. Given the enormous syndication profits available to the producer of a four or five year old series, networks now have a powerful profit incentive to pick up shows that have failed on another network. One more year on the air (even in the face of marginal ratings) could produce a significant payoff just a few years down the road—and in some cases even sooner.

In the increasingly competitive environment of broadcast television, a new series is judged a success or failure after only three or four episodes have aired. One could argue that the retreads strategy gives failed but still deserving programs a second chance to find an audience. On the other hand, retreads perpetuate the culture of program recycling so prevalent among broadcasters, who would rather reuse another network's series than take a chance on entirely new program concepts.

Appendix: Figures

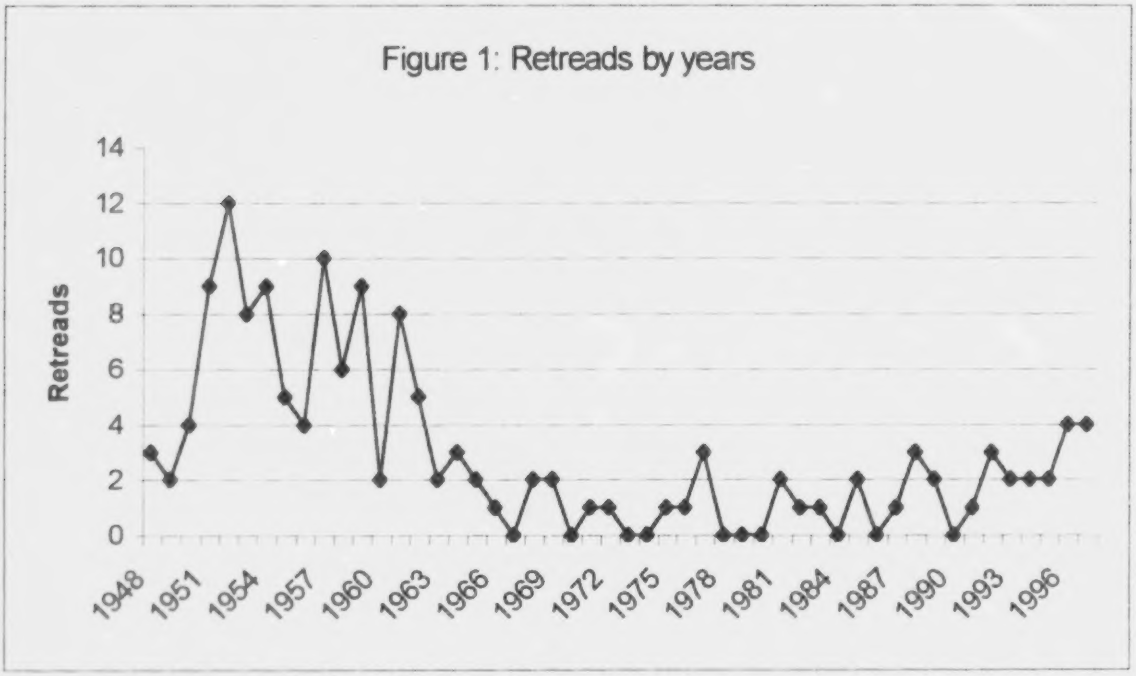


Figure 1 demonstrates the year-by-year use of retreads by the major networks between the 1948-1949 season (the first full season of commercial broadcasting in prime time) and 1997-1998, the last year of the study.

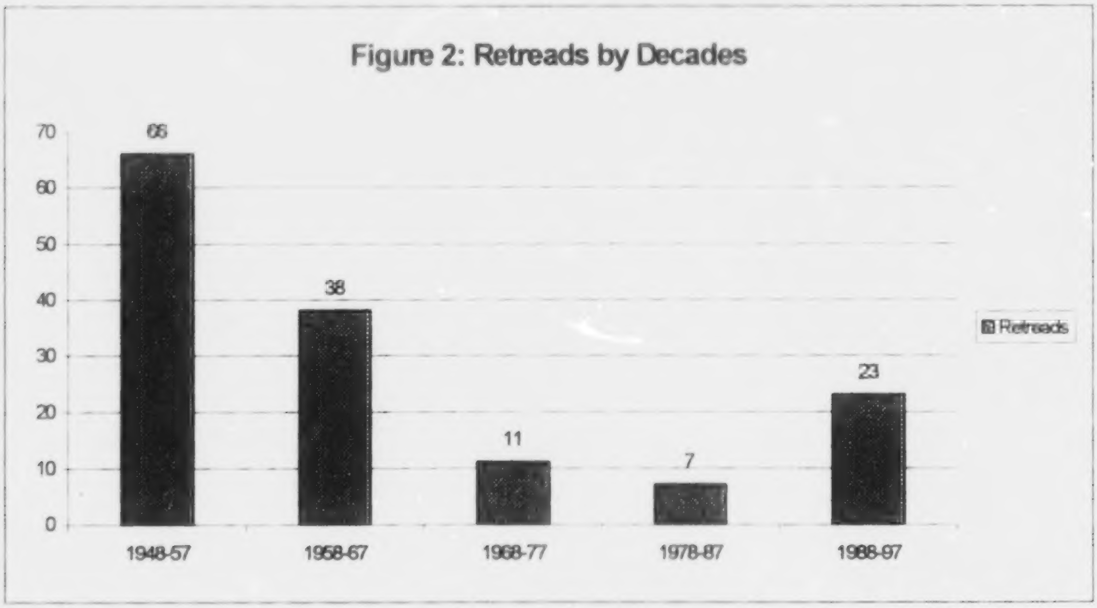


Figure 2 illustrates the use of retreads by the networks calculated in ten-year increments.

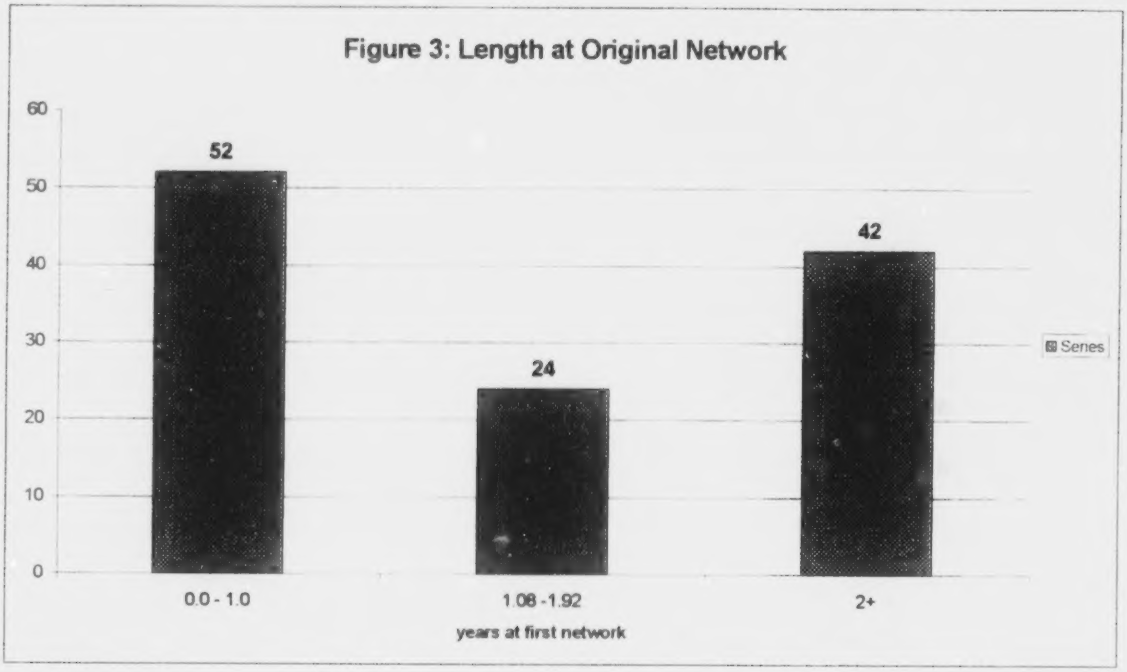


Figure 3 shows the longevity of programs at their originating networks, before their movement to new networks as retreads.

Bibliography:

Adams, W. J. (1997). Scheduling practices based on audience flow: What are the effects on new program success? Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 74, 839-858.

Are sponsors dropping the axe too fast? (1955, August 20). Sponsor, 9, 44-45, 112-15.

Becker, R. (1999, April). Managing brand identity: Network practice in the 1990s. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Cinema Studies, West Palm Beach, FL.

Bellamy, R. V., McDonald, D. G., & Walker, J. R. (1990). The spin-off as television program form and strategy. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34, 283-297.

Blum, R., & Lindheim, R. (1987). Primetime: Network television programming. Boston: Focal Press.

Brooks, T., & Marsh, E. (1998). The complete directory to prime time network TV shows: 1946–present (4th ed.). New York: Ballentine.

Brown, L. (1977). The New York Times encyclopedia of television. New York: Times Books.

FCC extends waiver. (1947, September 29). Broadcasting, 33, 20.

Flint, J. (1996, May 20). Webs' fall skeds riding on retreads. Variety, 363, 1, 50.

Gitlin, T. (1985). Inside prime time. New York: Pantheon.

Head, S. W., & Sterling, C. H. (1990). Broadcasting in America: A survey of electronic media (6th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Hilmes, M. (1997). Radio voices: American broadcasting, 1922-1952. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lewine, R. F., Eastman, S. T., & Adams, W. J. (1985). Prime-time network television programming. In S. L. Eastman, S. W. Head, & L. Klein (Eds.), Broadcast/cable programming (2nd ed., pp. 119-145). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Lewis, R. W. (1970). The Man on the 34th Floor. In B. G. Cole (Ed.), Television. New York: The Free Press.

McNeil, A. (1996). Total television: A comprehensive guide to programming from 1948 to the present (4th ed.). New York: Penguin.

Television and the Sponsor today. (1946, November). Sponsor, 1, 26, 62.

TV Programming: Why have ad agencies given up their role as producers? (1959, January 16). Printer's Ink, 226, 33-34.

Year-end report on these major radio and TV topics of 1954. (1954, December 27). Sponsor, 8, 29-31, 90-93.

PARTISAN AND STRUCTURAL BALANCE OF ELECTION STORIES ON THE 1998 GOVERNOR'S RACE IN MICHIGAN

By

Frederick Fico
and
William Cote

A paper submitted to the Mass Communication and Society Division of AEJMC for consideration for presentation at the annual convention in Phoenix, Arizona, in August 2000.

ABSTRACT

The partisan and structural balance of newspaper stories covering the 1998 governor's race in Michigan was assessed and compared to the newspaper coverage of three earlier elections. The 1998 election coverage favored the Democratic challenger in terms of space and prominence given his campaign's assertions. A detailed issue analysis, however, suggests that the Republican incumbent was able to dominate the substantive issue agenda, while the Democratic challenger became himself the issue because of his insulting campaign comments. However, reporters gave more news attention to challengers than to incumbents in each of the four elections compared, regardless of party affiliation. Challengers were favored in six of 10 stories across the four elections, with incumbents dominating fewer than three in 10.

The structural balance of stories -- assessed by the degree to which they were constructed to favor one candidate in terms of prominence and total space -- varied with the type of news organization the reporters worked for, with sources reporters used for stories, and with the creative story-construction decisions the reporters made in the writing process. Specifically, stories written by newspaper statehouse bureau reporters were more structurally balanced than those produced by AP or newsroom-based newspaper reporters. Stories based on interviews were more balanced than stories based on activities such as speeches or rallies.

Several institutional and newsroom factors indirectly influenced story balance. The bigger the newspaper staff size, the more statehouse bureau stories were produced, which in turn resulted in more balanced election stories. Further, the bigger the newspaper staff size, the bigger the newspaper's total story output, which was related indirectly to more balanced stories. Finally, the bigger the newspaper's staff size the bigger the newspaper's output of stories on the governor's race, which in turn increased the likelihood that stories would be based on interviews that produced more balanced stories.

INTRODUCTION

News coverage of elections clearly matters powerfully in any society in which citizens use candidate information to guide their voting. But the normative assumption that voters act on the basis of candidate views presupposes that such voters are first exposed to those views. This study explicitly assesses news coverage of those views.

Journalists advocate "fairness and balance" in covering public policy issues,[1] and news organizations depend economically on a mass audience attracted in part by the credibility of their claims to report fairly.[2] Therefore, this study explores how fairness and balance values translated into objectively measurable prominence and space accorded candidate views in election stories. To give context to this research, data from news coverage of four elections are assessed to determine if any news bias related more to the party or to the incumbency status of candidates.

Finally, this study analyzes how theoretically related factors such as news organization resources, newsroom priorities, and reporter work norms influenced such election stories. At a practical level, identifying these influences can illuminate what journalists can — or should — change in election reporting to better match their normative values of fairness and balance.

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Obviously, ethical norms such as fairness and balance can influence journalists' professional behavior. But such norms may provide little specific guidance for journalists on a particular story. For instance, codes accepted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Society of Professional Journalists and many newspapers called for fairness and balance or related values such as impartiality and unbiasedness.[3] But little or no guidance is given on how to impartially or fairly cover a conflict. Similarly, editors have indicated that impartiality is a major component of quality news reporting, and while these journalists may know such quality when they see it, it is unclear what rules they apply to assess particular stories.[4]

The Concern for Bias

Much journalistic concern for fairness and balance in reporting stems from the assumption that lapses in such qualities will lead the public to perceive bias, thereby harming news organization credibility.[5] But some journalistic biases are explicitly grounded in professional news values such as impact, proximity, timeliness and "newness" that may result in stories that are arguably unfair because these other values take precedence.[6] What journalists define as news, the sources they use and the views from those sources that they present may well constitute "biased samples" when compared to results from more systematic research techniques. For example, one study that included news coverage of Gulf War and abortion issues found that anti-war and pro-choice sources dominated coverage even as public opinion polls indicated more popular support for the pro-war and pro-life positions.[7]

Certainly reporters possess biases embedded in their individual backgrounds and intellectual processes.[8] But such individual biases must still conform to or operate within the institutional constraints and goals of the media organizations themselves.[9] Reporters must construct stories that reflect news values. Reporters select sources based on news value considerations of their institutional power, prominence or activity, and on their personal qualities of credibility, accessibility and reliability.[10] Further, reporters decide what space and prominence to give those sources in the structure of a story, and in particular what "leads" or characterizes the news value of the story as a whole. And in a conflict, reporters decide whether and how to get the "other side" into a story, and if so, what space or prominence to give them.[11] Editors reinforce or inhibit such story construction decisions with their own decisions on use and placement of the resulting stories.[12]

Election Coverage Bias

Many studies of presidential election reporting have generally found even-handed treatment of Republican and Democratic candidates.[13] Other studies have illuminated imbalanced news attention to presidential candidates, exemplified by studies by Stoval who found balanced treatment of candidates in 1980 but not in 1984.[14] Various explanations for such imbalances have included ownership patterns and liberal bias.

Studies focused on incumbency have also found uneven treatment of candidates.[15] Clarke and Evans found news bias in congressional elections favoring incumbents, which they attributed in part to the incumbents' greater ability to get news attention. Fico et. al. studying newspaper coverage of statehouse, congressional, U.S. Senate and U.S. presidential races found coverage favoring incumbents at the statehouse and congressional levels, but diminishing at the U.S. Senate and presidential levels. But Lowry and Shidler considered the preponderance of negative sound bites on network TV aimed at Republicans in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections more consistent with an explanation of liberal bias than of candidate incumbent or challenger status.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Election Story Characteristics

This research assumes that story structure manifests how journalists value fairness and balance. Consequently, this research examined the typical structure of election stories. Were such stories more likely to be one-sided or two-sided in their presentation of candidate views? Within the structure of a story, how prominently and extensively were such views presented? Which candidate dominated particular issues and what did that dominance look like? And more broadly, was coverage more related to the party or to the incumbency status of the candidates?

A further assumption in this research is that story structural characteristics may influence the perception of bias by readers. So this study calculated how often stories with typical structures occurred in the election news studied. If readers judge the impartiality of a news organization from just a subset of its campaign stories, what were the chances that they encountered fair and balanced ones in the 1998 governor's election?

The following research questions therefore probe the characteristics of these stories:

RQ1: How fair and balanced were election stories about the candidates?
RQ2: What issues favored candidates, and how did issue stories present candidates?
RQ3: How did partisan balance vary by candidate party or incumbency status?
RQ4: How structurally balanced were the campaign stories, whatever their partisan tilt?

Influences on Election Story Structural Balance

Finally, this research explores factors that might influence story balance, and assesses their importance relative to one another. Shoemaker and Reese suggest a hierarchy of influences on news content in general, with higher-level influences constraining factors at lower levels.[16] Specifically, they point to societal ideology and other, non-media social institutions as having the broadest influence, followed by media organizational goals and resources, followed by newsroom routines and finally by the individual values and characteristics of media workers. What, then, were the important direct and indirect influences on election story structure?

Although this conceptual ordering is useful, little research has been carried out to identify important influences on such a content quality as story balance, or to illuminate the interrelationships of variables at different levels that might influence such a content outcome However, several influences can be identified on the basis of past research and a priori logic that could be expected to influence content generally, and specifically the election reporting story qualities that are the focus of this research.

At the organization level, the staff available to cover an election campaign can certainly be expected to influence content outcomes. Certainly bigger staffs can be expected to produce more stories about an election. Further, several studies have found that management's allocation of staff resources to specialized bureaus can affect the quality as well as quantity of a news organization's public affairs reporting. Legislative studies by Fico found that reporters assigned to bureaus were more likely to use more sources in stories than wire service reporters or reporters working from local newsrooms.[17] However, more staff resources, all else equal, should reduce the pressures on individual reporters to fill available news hole. Consequently, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1: News organizations with more staff will produce more election stories
by specialized bureaus than will news organizations with fewer staff members.
H2: News organizations with more staff will produce more election stories
than will news organizations with fewer staff members.
H3: News organizations with more staff will produce **fewer election stories per reporter**
than will news organizations with fewer staff members.

Previous research on statehouse bureau reporting suggests that such specialized reporters use sources differently than do their newsroom-based colleagues or wire service reporters. Specialists obviously develop more of a knowledge of sources, and may have developed relationships that make those sources more accessible when need for stories. If such reporting qualities are also applicable to the statewide governor's race stories produced by such bureau reporters, the following hypotheses are plausible:

H4: Election stories produced by statehouse bureaus will be more likely to rely on interviews than stories produced by newsroom reporters.
H5: Election stories produced by statehouse bureaus will be more likely to be two-sided than stories produced by newsroom reporters.
H6: Election stories produced by statehouse bureaus will be **less** likely to be imbalanced than stories produced by newsroom reporters.

Media sociology studies indicate news work is shaped by newsroom influences that editors directly control. Editors communicate work norms for story numbers and type of coverage.[18] It is plausible that reporters who must produce more stories in a limited amount of time may compromise by using fewer sources in each story. One possible result is fewer stories relying on interviews, which require more initiative and time than easily observable rallies or other campaign events. Similarly, hard-pressed reporters may produce more one-sided and imbalanced election stories compared to colleagues who are able to take more time on fewer stories. Therefore, the following hypotheses relating editorially imposed constraints to election reporting are suggested:

H7: The more election stories reporters produce, the less they will be based on interviews.
H8: The more election stories reporters produce, the less they will they include both sides.
H9: The more election stories reporters produce, the more imbalanced they will be.

METHOD

This study explores these questions and hypotheses with a content analysis of all hard-news stories on the 1998 governor's race in Michigan's nine largest dailies from Labor Day to election day.[19] The study analyzes campaign stories containing quoted or paraphrased assertions by Democratic and Republican candidates and their supporters.[20] The partisan balance of the

1998 governor's race stories was compared to similarly analyzed ones produced by the same news organizations covering the 1994 Michigan governor's race and the 1996 U.S. presidential and senate races.[21] The 1998 election pitted incumbent Republican Gov. John Engler against Democratic nominee Geoffrey Fieger. Engler, running for his third term as governor, ultimately won with about 63 percent of the vote. Fieger, most widely known previously as defense attorney for assisted suicide advocate Jack Kevorkian, had won an upset victory in a three-way race for the Democratic nomination. Fieger was dogged during the campaign for past and more recent comments that were construed as anti-Christian and anti-Semitic. He also was criticized for campaign comments ridiculing the governor's family and personal appearance.

Fairness and Balance Measures

Story fairness is defined as the presence of quoted or paraphrased assertions by sources supporting **both** Republican incumbent Engler and Democratic challenger Fieger. The proportions of one-sided and two-sided stories therefore indicate the probability of reader exposure to stories they might plausibly construe as unfair or fair.

The partisan balance of each story was assessed by first determining the partisan balance of each of four components. These are: (1) total space: did the two candidates obtain equal story space for their assertions, or did one get more?; (2) lead position: did both candidates get to make assertions in the story's first paragraph lead, or was one candidate included but not the other?; (3) paragraphs 2-5 position: did both candidates get to make assertions somewhere in the story's second through fifth paragraphs, or was one candidate included but not the other?; and (4) paragraphs 6-10 position: did both candidates get to make assertions somewhere in the story's sixth through tenth paragraphs, or was one candidate included but not the other?

For example, the lead position component would be judged as (1) favoring Engler, if Engler-support assertions were included but not Fieger's ; (2) favoring Fieger, if the reverse were the case; (3) balanced, if both candidates' assertions were included in the lead, or (4) irrelevant, if neither candidates' assertions were in the lead. The overall partisan balance was then determined by whether more of the relevant components favored one candidate than the other.

A related index of each story's structural balance uses these same components to assess the degree to which a story was dominated by the same candidate. It was created by adding the number of balance components dominated by Engler, subtracting those dominated by Fieger, and then taking the absolute value of that figure. A 0 therefore indicates a structurally balanced story (and also one balanced between Engler and Fieger on the partisan index) and a 4 indicates that the same candidate dominated every structural balance component.

Validity and Reliability of Balance Measures

The validity of these balance measures depends on the assumption that stories are read from the top down and that material higher up has a greater, but unknown, likelihood of being encountered than material lower down.[22] The measurement weighting given assertion prominence therefore flows from the logical probabilities of a reader's exposure to story material. An arguably balanced story that deals sequentially with candidate assertions may not be perceived as such by a reader who stops before the paragraph in which the opposition begins to speak.

Quantifying partisan assertion position and length in the structure of stories avoids validity problems from categorizing the partisanship of whole stories or relying on evaluations of "tone." A story classified as favoring the Republican or Democrat, for instance, may arguably still be fair in that it included assertions from the opposition. And while judgments of news bias may be reliable in the context of a research study, such judgments are of unknown validity when it comes to what average readers may perceive. Focusing instead on the measurable relative treatment of opponent assertions does not require assumptions about the way readers may judge them.

A two-person coder reliability assessment for this study was performed on approximately 5 percent of stories randomly sampled from all relevant ones. All variables with less than 100 percent agreement still achieved a Scott's Pi of at least .90. The alpha reliability for the components of the partisan and structural balance indices was .78.

Explanatory Variables

Election stories were also coded for variables that could help explain variation in story structural balance drawn from three of the hierarchical levels suggested by Shoemaker and Reese.

At the organizational level, each newspaper's staff size was recorded as a measure of resources that could affect election coverage. Further, each newspaper's stories were also coded for their statehouse bureau or local newsroom origin as a measure of different institutional norms governing reporters even within the same news organization.

At the newsroom level, each governor's race story was coded for that newsroom's total general story and specific election story production as a measure of overall work norms and election coverage priority. As a control tapping editorial priority for election stories, each governor's race story was coded for front page, section front page or inside placement.

At the individual reporter level, similar counts were made for the total election story production of each reporter as measures of that reporter's work norm. The reporter's use of interview sources in election stories was also considered a measure of independence in covering the campaign. The reporter's total production of all stories was included as a control.

Analysis of Data

These data constitute the universe of what was available and findings therefore do not require inferential statistics for generalization. Research questions on partisan balance of stories are addressed with proportions. Questions on structural balance of stories are addressed with mean balance scores. Regression analysis was used to assess hypothesized influences of explanatory variables on the balance of the stories. Significance tests were used in this analysis only to identify more substantively important influences on story structural balance.

RESULTS

Some 400 stories were relevant for analysis from the nine newspapers. About 47 percent of these stories were produced by Associated Press, a third by local newsroom staff members and the balance by statehouse bureau reporters. About 15 percent of stories were run on a section front page and about 17 percent were run on Page One. About 56 percent of the stories were based on interviews. About a third of all the stories were one-sided

Partisan Balance of Stories

Overall, Fieger dominated the partisan balance of 51 percent of stories on the 1998 governor's race compared to 35 percent for Engler. He got more space in 51 percent of the stories compared to 33 percent for Engler. Fieger dominated 21 percent of leads compared to Engler's 18 percent. Fieger dominated paragraphs two through five in 34 percent of stories compared to 24 percent for Engler. Fieger-support assertions were therefore more lengthy and more prominent than those supporting Engler, and thus more likely to be encountered by readers.

Fieger dominated coverage in every newspaper, but by widely varying margins. He dominated the Flint Journal by just 2 percentage points and the Saginaw News by just 4 percentage points. By contrast, Fieger led in the Oakland Press by 32 percentage points and in the Grand Rapids Press by 39 percentage points.

Campaign Issues

Coverage of particular campaign issues also varied from the overall pattern in the sample. Nine substantive issues were coded during the 1998 governor's race. Engler dominated three issues -- the economy, corruption, and education — that totaled 15 percent of the sample. Fieger dominated four issues — law enforcement, the budget, candidate personality and "other" -- that made up 53 percent of sample stories. Two issues, the environment and welfare, were evenly balanced between the two candidates, but made up only 7 percent of sample stories. In addition, Fieger dominated a tenth, "horse race" issue, which made up about a quarter of the sample. Stories on the most covered issues dominated by each candidate, making up nearly 40 percent of the total sample, display significant differences in overall story partisanship and the extent to which candidates dominated story agendas.

Education, covered by 39 stories, was the largest one dominated by Engler. Ten randomly selected education stories examined in detail were highly partisan. On average, two-thirds of the stories' paragraphs were dominated by partisan assertions. And 80 percent of the leads contained such assertions, twice the overall sample average, indicating that the candidates mostly set the story agendas on this issue.

Seven stories from five of the nine sample newspapers covered Engler's proposal for "freedom schools" in which parents would be given more local control. The extensive attention given this proposal, even though Engler himself admitted that he had few specifics, probably resulted from the governor's previous legislative success in enacting sweeping education finance reform. Fieger forces charged the proposal would make the job of educators even more difficult. Some stories also discussed whether Engler's earlier reform of education finance had more helped or hurt school districts. Other stories concerned school dropouts and teacher strikes. Most of the 10 stories used non-partisan as well as partisan sources, either to provide data or to interpret the issue.

Candidate personality, covered by 113 stories, was the largest one dominated by Fieger. Some 28 randomly-selected personality stories were on average less dominated by partisan assertions than the education ones. Overall, only about half of all story paragraphs contained partisan assertions, and only 57 percent of story leads contained them. But this masks a significant division in the topics of such personality stories. A substantial minority of stories examined in detail the candidates' backgrounds and values. For example, the lead of an Oct. 5 story in the Saginaw News asserted: "Whatever you think of Geoffrey Fieger as a gubernatorial candidate, there's no denying he's a dynamite attorney." In addition, obviously pre-planned personality stories on candidates were paired, often side-by-side on the same page, dealing with such the candidates' religious faiths and the perspectives of their spouses.

Most stories, however, focused on Fieger's vitriolic election campaign assertions. For example, he called the governor a "bully and coward" for opposing assisted suicide in an Oct. 1 story in the Kalamazoo Gazette, and during rallies Fieger was commonly cited referring to the size of the governor's "gluteus maximus." In other stories, Fieger had to defend himself against criticism for such assertions. For example, an AP story in the Grand Rapids Press on Oct. 28 reported Fieger explaining as "comedic" his comment that Engler was the product of a humananimal mating. In the same story Fieger denied ever saying that the governor's children might have tails. A sidebar detailed Fieger quotes about the governor, call-in show listeners' questions about them, and Fieger's responses. In addition, stories focused on the Engler-campaign's attacks on Fieger's character and fitness for office.

If these analyzed stories are typical of the of the campaign coverage, then Engler was able to set the issue agenda of the election even when vehemently contested by opponents who got more say. Fieger's personal attacks on the governor often made himself the issue. And stories in which Fieger had to defend his attacks were easily as numerous as stories giving readers information and insights into his beliefs and values. Fieger certainly got more news attention than the governor, but at least some of that attention may have been wasted or even self-defeating.

Party and Incumbency

The novelty of Democratic challenger and the outrageousness of some of his comments may alone have been sufficient to obtain more attention than the incumbent Republican governor during the 1998 campaign. But stories written on the 1994 governor's race and on the 1996 U.S. Senate and presidential races indicate a similar pattern of attention to challengers. Specifically, stories written by newspaper staff and statehouse bureau reporters on the four elections suggest that the incumbency or challenger status of the candidates was more influential than party in determining coverage balance. The four-election average indicates that Republican and Democratic candidates each dominated about four in 10 stories. (See Table 1) But in each election, the challenger was heavily favored in the coverage, dominating six in 10 stories on the four elections compared to incumbent domination of three in 10 stories. (See Table 2). Interestingly, Fieger obtained less coverage for his assertions than did any other challenger.

Structural Balance of Stories

The structural balance of these stories assesses more generally than partisan balance how much candidates dominated stories, whatever their party or incumbency status, and therefore may indicate how likely readers are to perceive fairness or bias in the news. In general, the data show that a reader of a story dominated by either Engler or Fieger was not very likely to encounter prominent or extensive assertions by the opponent. Each candidate dominated stories by more than two of the four balance components measured.

Overall, readers had nearly identical 4 in 10 chances of encountering stories that were either mostly balanced (0-1 on the scale) or mostly imbalanced (3-4 on the scale). Story fairness and structural balance were obviously related. About 35 percent of stories were both fair (i.e., two-sided) and mostly balanced, while 21 percent of stories were both unfair (one-sided) and mostly imbalanced.

Influences on Story Structural Balance

Hypothesized relationships for staff size all were supported. Specifically, staff size was strongly related to a newspaper's total production of governor's race stories (Beta = .72), to the production of statehouse bureau election stories (Beta = .27), and to the production of election stories by individual reporters (Beta - .26). However, statehouse bureau story production was not significantly associated with interview sourcing or with the use of both sides in stories. Statehouse bureau stories were associated, however, with less imbalance in election stories (Beta = -.20). Finally, hypothesized relationships for reporter election story production were not supported. Contrary to expectations, the more stories a reporter wrote on the election, the more likely they were to be two-sided (Beta = .17).

Table 3 displays the influence of all variables at various levels, including the control variables, on the dependent variable of story balance. Figure 1 illustrates the causal interrelationships among variables hypothesized to have influence on story balance.

The most important direct influences on story structural balance, controlling for the effects of all the other variables, were at the organization and reporter levels. (See Table 3) However, the creative story construction decisions of reporters accounted for the most important direct influences on story structure balance. Stories that included both campaign sides were much more likely to be balanced than one-sided stories. And stories constructed with a lead partisan assertion were much more likely to be imbalanced than stories without such a prominent partisan assertion. These relationships should not be surprising. A story that does not include one of the sides cannot possibly be balanced. And given that a story's lead sets the "agenda" for the whole story, it is not surprising that a lead partisan assertion predicts more such assertions in the story paragraphs directly following.

The model of these relationships illuminates the need to take into account how higher-level factors indirectly influenced lower-level ones that in turn affected story structure. (See Figure 1). Clearly the larger the newspaper staff, the more stories they produced generally, the more stories they produced specifically on the governor's race, and the more those governor's race stories were produced by statehouse bureaus. These in turn directly or indirectly diminished imbalance in the resulting election stories.

Newspapers producing a greater volume of governor's race stories than others were also more likely to have reporters who based those stories on interviews. Given a news organization's commitment to election coverage, it seems plausible that editors would support broader source searching attempts by reporters, resulting in relatively more interview stories that in turn diminished story imbalance.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

News coverage of the 1998 governor's race in Michigan could be perceived by readers as significantly imbalanced. Readers had only a 1 in 3 chance of encountering stories that were fair and balanced, as assessed by measures in this study. In fact, a third of stories were completely one-sided, and 4 in 10 stories were mostly imbalanced, whether they were fair or not. Voters trying to make up their minds about candidates did not encounter very many individual stories giving even-handed presentations of their differences on issues.

But it may be impossible for news coverage of any election to be "perfectly" fair and balanced in terms of the measures used in this study. And given journalistic news value priorities that may depend on some particular circumstance, that outcome may not even be desirable. In this election, Democratic challenger Geoffrey Fieger made personal attacks that were both newsworthy themselves and that in turn aroused newsworthy critical reaction. The governor, by contrast, avoided personal confrontation and even stayed away from any debates with the challenger. The result was substantial news attention that focused on Fieger, attention that the detailed personality issue assessment suggests may not have served his campaign well.

In fact, in the context of all four elections observed, Fieger got less attention than any other challenger. Still, these findings lend more support to the notion that news bias follows candidate institutional status rather than journalistic partisanship. Further, the direction of that bias indicated in this research was to favor challengers. Possibly challengers had this advantage because these elections were highly visible and statewide in scope, with challengers taking more energetic measures to get attention and news media more willing to give "unknowns" more exposure. An incumbency advantage may still hold at smaller-constituency electoral levels.

Organizational and newsroom priorities had important effects on story structure. Organizations large enough to deploy reporters to statehouse bureaus obtained more balanced election stories as a result. And in general, the more reporters a newspaper had, the more they could be used for election coverage which in turn may have given reporters enough experience in election coverage to be more sensitive to story balance.

The newsroom priorities of editors also made important differences in the election coverage. News organizations concerned with fairness and balance might deploy more staff to election reporting and provide support for more reporter initiative in election story sourcing. Specifically, when editors gave reporters more time and encouragement to do interview stories, the result was more fair and balanced stories. Moreover, the lead emphasis of those interview stories was more likely to be neutral or balanced than stories based on activities.

The reporters' creative control over the construction of stories was a major influence on the structural balance assessed in this research. Even fair stories could be badly imbalanced in the structure used for presenting information. Journalists who wish to be fair and balanced may therefore be undermining their own efforts in the story construction process if one candidate is given unchallenged prominence in placement and attention. And more broadly, enhancing the manifest fairness and balance of election stories could help improve the credibility of the news media as a source of unbiased public policy information crucial to democratic decision-making.

ENDNOTES

1. See Louis A. Day, *Ethics in Mass Communication.* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pubg. Co., 1991), 38-39. Several of these codes are also listed in the appendices of William L. Rivers, Wilbur Schramm and Clifford Christians, Responsibility in Mass Communication (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1980).

2. See Cecilie Gaziano, "How Credible is the Credibility Crisis?" Journalism Quarterly 65 (Summer 1988): 267-278; 375; Cecilie Gaziano and Kristin McGrath, "Measuring the Concept of Credibility," Journalism Quarterly 63 (Autumn 1986): 451-462.

3. "Be fair, unbiased, accurate, complete, factual, professional, aggressive, and compassionate," the ASNE advised in "Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust." (Washington, D.C.: American Society of Newspaper Editors, April, 1985), 11. The Freedom Forum announced Feb. 24, 1997 that it would allocate $1 million to "explore new procedures to enhance free press, to increase fairness in the media and to improve public perception of fairness in the media." See "Freedom Forum News," Vol. V, No. 3, Feb. 24, 1997, 1.

4. Accuracy and impartiality of reporting ranked as first and second attributes of editorial quality in a 1977 survey of 746 editors cited in Leo Bogart, *Press and the Public.* 2nd ed. (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1989).

5. See: Christine D. Urban, "Why Newspaper Credibility Has Been Dropping: A report for the American Society of Newspaper Editors." Urban & Associates, Inc. December 1998.

6. Most reporting texts emphasize both the values of conflict and fairness. See Brian S. Brooks, George Kennedy, Daryl R. Moen and Don Ranly, *News Reporting & Writing* 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 3-15.

7. Frederick Fico and Stan Soffin, "Fairness and Balance of Selected Newspaper Coverage of Controversial National, State and Local Issues." Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 72 (Autumn 1995): 621-633.

8. S. Holly Stocking and Paget H. Gross, *How Do Journalists Think?* (Smith Research Center, ERIC Clearinghouse, 1989).

9. Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content.* 2nd ed. (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, 1996).

10. Angela Powers and Frederick Fico, "Influences on Reporters' Use of Sources at High Circulation U.S. Newspapers." Newspaper Research Journal 15 (Fall 1994): 87-97.

11. Tuchman used the term "strategic ritual" to characterize the journalistic convention of

getting both sides of a controversy into a story in order to avoid criticism. See: Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual," American Journal of Sociology 77 (January 1972): 660-679.

12. Sociologist Warren Breed referred to the "newsroom socialization" of reporters as they learned to conform to conventions rewarded or punished by superiors. See: Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom," Social Forces 33 (May 1955): 326-335.

13. Guido H. Stempel III, perhaps the most tenacious investigator of how prestige newspapers cover presidential elections over the years, has found roughly equal attention given to Republican and Democratic candidates. For his most recent studies, see: Guido H. Stempel III and John W. Windhouser, "The Prestige Press Revisited: Coverage of the 1980 Presidential Campaign," Journalism Quarterly, (Spring 1984); 49-55; Guido H. Stempel III and John W. Windhauser, "Coverage of the 1988 Presidential Campaign." Journalism Quarterly 70 (Summer 1993): 311-320.

14. See examples of such mixed results in: James Glen Stovall, "The Third Party Challenge of 1980: News Coverage of the Presidential Campaign," Journalism Quarterly 62 (Summer 1985): 266-271; James Glen Stovall, "Coverage of the 1984 Presidential Campaign," Journalism Quarterly 65 (Summer 1988): 443-449; 484. Bias attributed to ownership ideology was found by Keith Kenny and Chris Simpson, "Was Coverage of the 1988 Presidential Race by Washington's Two Major Dailies Biased?" Journalism Quarterly 70 (Summer 1993): 443-449; 484. Johnson found a front-runner bias in coverage of the 1988 Democratic primary. See: Thomas J. Johnson, "The Seven Dwarfs and Other Tales: How the Networks and Select Newspapers Covered the 1988 Democratic Primaries." Journalism Quarterly 70 (Summer 1993): 311-320. Mantler and Whiteman found a pro-Republican bias in newspaper coverage of the 1992 presidential race, while Lowry and Shidler found an anti-Republican bias in network news coverage of that race. See Gordon Mantler and David Whiteman, "Attention to Candidates and Issues in Newspaper Coverage of the 1992 Presidential Campaign." Newspaper Research Journal 16 (Summer 1995): 14-28; Dennis T. Lowry and Jon A Shidler, "The Sound Bites, the Biters and the Bitten: An Analysis of Network TV News Bias in Campaign '92." Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 72 (Spring 1995): 33-44.

15. Peter Clarke and Susan Evans, *Covering Campaigns*. (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983); Frederick Fico, John Clogston and Gary Pizante, "Influences of Candidate Party and Incumbency on News Coverage of the 1984 Elections in Michigan Dailies." Journalism Quarterly 65 (Autumn 1988): 709-713; Dennis T. Lowry and Jon A. Shidler, "The Sound Bites, the Bitters, and the Bitten: A Two Campaign Test of the Anti-Incumbent Bias Hypothesis in Network TV News," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 75 (Winter 1998): 719-729.

16. Shoemaker and Reese, op. cit.

17. Frederick Fico, A Comparison of Legislative Sources in Newspaper and Wire Service

Stories. Newspaper Research Journal 5 (Spring 1984): 35-44; Frederick Fico, The Replication of Findings on newspaper and Wire Service Source Use in Two Statehouses. Newspaper Research Journal 7 (Winter 1985): 45-51.

18. Frederick Fico, Perceived Roles and Editorial Concerns Influence Reporters in Two Statehouses. Journalism Quarterly 62 (Winter 1985): 784-790; Frederick Fico, Influence of Perceived Editorial Concern and Role Self-Concept on Source Use of Reporters in Two Statehouses. Journalism Quarterly 63 (Summer 1986): 322-330.

19. Newspaper circulations range from 50,000 to more than 300,000 and account for about 70 percent of Michigan's total daily circulation. They are the Saginaw News, the Macomb Daily, the Kalamazoo Gazette, the Lansing State Journal, the Oakland Press, the Flint Journal, the Grand Rapids Press, the Detroit News and the Detroit Free Press.

20. Several types of stories were excluded such as reporter analyses, and "Q & A" stories. Poll stories or horse race assessment were excluded unless they also contained assertions by candidates or their supporters. Stories about Gov. Engler in his role as governor also were excluded unless campaign assertions were present or unless such stories indicated that some governmental action had campaign implications.

Assertions were quoted or paraphrased statements explicitly linked to candidates or their supporters by verbs of attribution indicating speaking such as "said," "stated," "argued," etc. Verbs denoting state of minds of candidates or their supporters (e.g., "feels," "thinks," "believes," etc.) were also considered to signal assertions when it was clear that such verbs were used as synonyms for verbs such as "said."

21. See: Frederick Fico and William Cote, "Fairness and Balance in Election Reporting," Newspaper Research Journal 18 (Summer/Fall, 1997): 50-63; Frederick Fico and William Cote, "Fairness and Balance of Stories in Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Presidential Election." Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly. 76 (Spring 1999): 124-137. Data on the coverage of the U.S. Senate race has not been reported elsewhere.

The 1994 governor's race pitted Gov. Engler against Democratic challenger Howard Wolpe, a former congressman. The 1996 U.S. Senate race saw Republican challenger Ronna Romney defeated by Democratic incumbent Carl Levin, while in the presidential race Republican Bob Dole, the former U.S. Senate majority leader, was defeated by President Bill Clinton.

22. Many studies have estimated readership based on article position or size in a news medium, but none have estimated declines in readership as readers move down through a story. Fiedler et. al. in their reporting text estimate that more than 40 percent of readers fail to go beyond the fifth paragraph of a story, but no research documentation is given for this estimate. See: Fred Fedler, John R. Bender, Lucinda Davenport and Paul E. Kostyu, *Reporting for the Media.* 6th ed. Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt, 1997) :107.

Table 1: Balance of Stories Favoring Republicans and Democrats (Percent of Newspaper-Produced Stories* Favoring Candidates)

	Gov. 1994	Sen. 1996	Pres. 1996	Gov. 1998	All
Favors Republicans	28%	63%	61%	33%	43%
Favors Democrats	58%	17%	30%	53%	44%
Balanced	14%	20%	10%	14%	13%
Story N	214	76	221	210	721

Table 2: Balance of Stories Favoring Challengers and Incumbents (Percent of Newspaper-Produced Stories* Favoring Candidates)

	Gov. 1994	Sen. 1996	Pres. 1996	Gov. 1998	All
Favors Challengers	58%	63%	61%	53%	61%
Favors Incumbents	28%	17%	30%	33%	26%
Balanced	14%	20%	10%	14%	13%
Story N	214	76	221	210	721

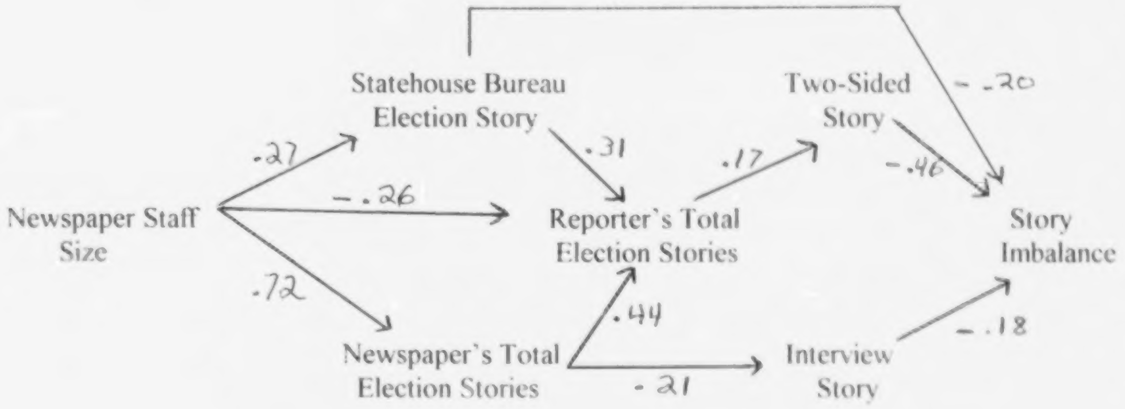
* Stories exclude AP stories in each election year, and in 1996 also exclude syndicated stories from other sources covering the presidential race.

Table 3: Direct Influences on Story Structural Balance (Coefficients are Betas. Statistically significant Betas are in bold. A positive relationship indicates that the influence **increases im**balance. A negative relationship indicates that the influence **decreases im**balance.)

Influence Type	**Story Balance**
Organization Level	
Staff Size	.05
Statehouse Bureau	**-.20**
Newsroom Level	
Story Prominence	-.01
Total Story Production	-.06
Total Governor's Race Stories	.00
Reporter Level	
Reporter's Total Stories	-.06
Reporter's Governor's Race Stories	.02
Interview-Based Story	**-.18**
Story-Construction Level	
Two-sided story	**-.46**
Partisan Lead Story	**.44**

Explained Variance = .57
Equation Significance = .00

Figure 1: Model of Direct and Indirect Influences on Story Structural Balance. (Coefficients are statistically significant Betas. A positive sign indicates the influence **increases story imbalance.** A negative sign indicates the influence **decreases story imbalance.**)


Statehouse Bureau Election Story
Two-Sided Story
- -.20
.27
.31
.17
-.46
- .26
Newspaper Staff Size
Reporter's Total Election Stories
Story Imbalance
.72
.44
-.18
Newspaper's Total Election Stories
- .21
Interview Story

NEWSPAPER LETTERS AND PHONE-MAIL TO THE EDITOR: A COMPARISON OF READER INPUT[*]

Michael E. Dupre
Department of Sociology
Saint Anselm College
100 Saint Anselm Drive
Manchester, NH 03102-1310
(603) 641-7127 voice
(603) 641-7116 fax
mdupre@anselm.edu

David A. Mackey
Department of Sociology
Framingham State College
100 State Street
Framingham, MA 01701-9101
(508) 626-4879 voice
(508) 626-4040 fax
dmackey@frc.mass.edu

---

[*] Presented at the Mass Communication and Society Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Convention, August 2000, Phoenix, AZ.
Please direct all correspondence to Michael E. Dupre.

NEWSPAPER LETTERS AND PHONE-MAIL TO THE EDITOR: A COMPARISON OF READER INPUT

Michael E. Dupre, Saint Anselm College

David A. Mackey, Framingham State College

ABSTRACT

Technology is redefining the public forum and the avenues of public expression in the democratic process. Newspaper letters to the editor, traditionally a popular source for citizen discourse, are beginning to be overshadowed by phone-mail columns. This paper compares letters and phone-mail published in a mid-sized New England city newspaper to ascertain their similarities and differences as means of public expression.

NEWSPAPER LETTERS AND PHONE-MAIL TO THE EDITOR: A COMPARISON OF READER INPUT

In the last chapter of their book on *Public Opinion and Responsible Democracy,* Ippolito, Walker and Kolson (1976) conclude that the first building block upon which democracy stands consists of the opinions and attitudes of the people. Pointing out that it is the political responsibility of citizens in a democratic society both individually and collectively to acquire meaningful attitudes on governmental affairs, the quality of governing will be directly related to the quality of public opinion (1976:302). If opinion is shaped by information, the press renders an important function as a principal vendor in this regard. Although results from recent studies remind us to take caution and not overlook the role of television in providing political information (Chaffee and Frank, 1996; Guo and Moy, 1998), the significance of newspapers as a source of political information, and as a forum for shaping public opinion in American democracy, is venerable and remains integral. Writing over a century and a half ago about the relationship between public associations and newspapers, de Tocqueville points out that it is difficult for men to affiliate in democratic countries. In effect, they are strangers in the crowd. A newspaper provides a beacon to meet and unite (Vol II,1967:135). Perhaps as timely today as when he first made the observation, de Tocqueville concluded:

> In order that an association amongst a democratic people should have any power, it must be a numerous body. The persons of whom it is composed are therefore scattered over a wide extent, and each of them is detained in the place of

> his domicile by the narrowness of his income, or by the small unremitting exertions by which he earns it. Means then must be found to converse everyday without seeing each other, and to take steps in common without having met. Thus hardly any democratic association can do without newspapers (Vol II, 1967;135).

If alive, no doubt de Tocqueville would be delighted to observe how newspapers have remained at the heart of our participatory democracy. Even with reported declines in readership, newspapers remain an important source of public affairs information (Robinson and Levy, 1996), and continue to act as a forum for public discourse. Almost as old as newspapers themselves, letters to the editor provide newspapers an arena in which a good measure of this public discourse may be carried out.

The contribution of newspaper letters to the editor in the democratic process has been well documented. In his study Tarrant found that letter writers felt their letters helped to inform the newspaper's readership. He also found that letter writers viewed the"Mail Bag" as a democratic institution, where citizens freely aired their interests (Tarrant, 1957). Vacin found that letter writers in his study believed their letters might affect public opinion by keeping the public informed on topics of interest (Vacin, 1965). According to Davis and Rarick (1964:109), "One of the functions of letters to the editor in a democratic society is that of catharsis. The letter column gives the irate, the antagonist, the displeased a chance to speak out and be heard." They conclude that the letter column functions as a safety valve as much as an instrument of persuasion (Davis and Rarick, 1964). Several more recent studies depart from the customary discussions about the political focus of letters to the editor to address writers' viewpoints about crime and justice matters. Lambkin and Morneau (1988) compared the image of police in editorials to the image of police in letters to the editor in three papers in and around Los Angeles. In an examination of letters to the editor where attention was on crime, Pritchard and Berkowitz (1991)concluded that letters to the editor were more important in understanding the content of front pages and of editorials than had been previously realized. Dupre and Mackey (1998) utilized letters to the editor to address the salience of crime compared to other social issues. Perhaps Grey and Brown summarize the contributions of letters to the editor the best by noting, "Certainly letters can help give some indicators of levels and directions of public interest" (Grey and Brown, 1970:455).

Over the years letters to the editor remain a popular and standard feature of most American newspapers, one of the main forums for public discourse and essential to the democratic process (Renfro, 1979; Sigelman&Walkosz, 1992;Wahl-Jorgensen, 1999). During the past decade newspapers experienced a tremendous increase in the number of letters to the editor they receive (Editor and Publisher, 1995; Hynds, 1994). Readership surveys show that the editorial section and letters continue as one of the most popular features (Fitzgerald, 1994; Wahl-Jorgensen, 1999).

While letters to the editor continue as a popular and standard feature of most American newspapers, the appeal of recent communication technologies are beginning to redefine the nature of the public forum and the avenues of citizen expression of opinions in a participatory democracy. Electronic mail and the Internet are seen as the vehicles for energizing democracy and encouraging political discourse and participation in the information age(Groper, 1996; Berman and Witzner, 1997).

Long term potential for increased public discourse via electronic communication appears limitless, and a valuable contribution for democracy, but short term realities dampen the enthusiasm. Computer and access cost, online service, the learning curve, and resistance to innovation are a few of the concerns which affect the momentum of maximizing the available technology. For now we must be content with less technological and more traditional avenues of democratic expression and participation.

Newspapers are not immune to the new technologies. By availing themselves to the latest technologies newspapers are beginning to experience an increase in receiving readers' input electronically through e-mail (Noack, 1994), and by phone-mail (Hunter, 1995). This is good news for newspapers and for the critical role they play in the democratic process. By providing reader input through the utilization of new technologies newspapers continue as an important forum for public expression in a participatory democracy.

If, as the claim is made, Internet technology permits increased citizen participation in democracy, the same claim can be made that the availability of newspaper e-mail and phone-mail columns, as vehicles for readers' expressing an opinion on public affairs, may encourage a broader segment of the population to participate. This may be especially true when it comes to phone-mail columns.

Studies of newspaper letter writers indicate that, for the most part, typical writers represent a demographically higher socio-economic status group compared to the general population (Forsythe, 1950; Tarrant, 1957; Vacin, 1965). If true, letter writers may represent a more articulate minority of the community, whose concerns may not always reflect the majority of the population who are less inclined to write a letter.

The speed and ease of the phone-mail to the editor encourages increased reader input since the communication is more immediate, requires less polish, and needs minimal articulation of arguments or positions when compared to a traditional letter to the editor.

Phone-mail, as an extension of telephone technology, facilitates reader communication with the newspaper for several reasons. For one, the telephone may be viewed as a valuable tool in the democratic process. Bakke reminds us that it is a medium not just limited to the efficient transfer of information, but also may be interpreted as a technology with political relevancy (1996). Cherry (1977) contends that the telephone may allow for a greater degree of citizen participation in democratic affairs. Due to its easy access and low cost the telephone, as one of the Pool's technologies of freedom, encourages free speech and democracy (Pool, 1983).

In addition, the telephone provides an "equalization" process whereby oral interaction bypasses both traditional writing skills and traditional linear hierarchal arrangements through which information flows (Meyrowitz, 1985, 161). By using the telephone the less adept letter writing citizen now gains an equal footing with the better educated, more adept letter writing citizen in expressing public opinion. Since a telephone message is less formal and requires minimal coding skills, it is more spontaneous. Most citizens have opinions about a variety of concerns and issues. Letters to the editor provide insights regarding the identification and articulation of these concerns and issues, as well as measure the level of collective response among letter writers. However, the task of writing a letter involves an expenditure of time and effort. Readers who will not take the time to write letters will call (Hunter, 1995).

Although phone-mail columns are gaining in popularity, empirical research on them is lacking. Needed is an empirical baseline to establish the similarities and differences between letters to the editor and phone-mail columns as avenues of public expression. This paper compares newspaper phone-mail and traditional letters to the editor submitted by readers. To facilitate analysis three research questions direct the focus of comparisons: 1)*Are the thematic areas addressed by callers similar to those addressed by letter writers? 2)What is the distribution of communities representing callers and letter writers? 3)Compared to letter writers, are callers more negative when expressing their opinions on public matters?*

RESEARCH DESIGN

This paper provides a systematic comparison of reader input of calls and letters to one mid-sized city's daily newspaper, the Lowell(MA) *Sun*. The *Sun* has a daily subscription of 52,508 and a Sunday circulation of 55,806 (Gale, 1999:860). It is a politically low-keyed community newspaper, with a clearly defined readership who reside in the Greater Lowell Area. In addition to publishing the traditional letters to the editor, the *Sun* also encourages e-mail and phone-mail submissions which are published daily in a column titled BackTalk[1]. The BackTalk column is published six days per week (Monday -Saturday) with occasional exceptions. Most of the letters to the editor are published in the Sunday edition of the *Sun*, with letters also published in one of the weekday editions.

---

[1] Although BackTalk receives both e-mail as well as phone-mail communiques, only phone-mail was studied.

Comparisons were made between traditional letters to the editor with phone-mail messages received for BackTalk and published in the daily Suburban and Sunday editions of the Lowell *Sun* during calendar year 1998[2]. This time frame was selected to avoid the effects of a significant short term event which may garner considerable public attention.

On average, there were about 10 calls per day published in the BackTalk column, with a range of about 5 to 24 per day. Four to six letters were published, on average, on the days the Letters to The Editor column appeared. The *Sun* received a combined total of 3425 calls and letters during the time of the study. Calls published in the BackTalk column accounted for 93% (N = 3185) of the communiques, while letters published in the Letters-to-the Editor Column accounted for only 7% (N = 240).

---

[2] The *Sun* publishes a Metro and a Suburban edition of the paper. The Suburban edition was selected because of accessibility. The same letters to the editor are published in both editions. To maintain local interest, on some days different calls may be published in the Metro and Suburban editions. The frequency of "zoning' depends on the topics. The authors compared calls published in both editions and concluded that minimal differences in the general themes were presented. It was felt that the Suburban edition presented a better representation of concerns from the geographical area reached by the *Sun*.

NEWSPAPER LETTERS AND PHONE-MAIL TO THE EDITOR: A COMPARISON OF READER INPUT

A blending of quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to address the three research questions. Content analysis, a technique frequently employed in mass communication research (Holsti, 1969; Stempel III, 1981) was used to classify themes, categories, and determine the positive or negative direction of the communiques. Quantitative approaches were used to augment content analysis. Empirical measures were used to quantify magnitude and ranking of categories and the frequency of occurrence.

Manifest and latent themes of the calls and the letters were reviewed. The process of coding included considerations of the words, events, and people included in the communication as well as the "interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physically presented data" (Berg, 1998:225). Apriori categories of letters generated from previous research guided early coding procedures but did not dictate categories.

Due to the relative novelty of phone-mail as a community communication forum there existed an element of uncertainty with relying on any existing content analysis categories used in earlier newspaper research (Deutschmann,1959; Graber,1980). The decision was made to utilize techniques of grounded theory for creating the coding categories used in comparing calls and letters themes(Strauss and Corbin, 1990). By utilizing aspects of grounded theory, the validity of the researcher constructed themes were increased since categories emerged from the data. As

Strauss and Corbin (1990) state, "A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon" (p. 23)

Initial coding focused on the calls published in BackTalk. While the authors were aware of categories, themes, and the intent of letter writers discussed in previous research, there was no guarantee that phone-mail, a non-traditional form of reader input, would conform to these categories. A primary goal of the current research was to develop themes and categories of calls which reflected the actual nature of those communiques. Thus, our analysis focused on coding the calls and then comparing the letters.

The content analysis process involved three stages: data immersion, open coding, and axial coding. Data immersion involved reading and analyzing the calls. During and following the data immersion, open coding was utilized for its "generative ability" for category creation. The second stage, open coding of communiques, produced tentative categories used to explain and summarize the themes of the phone-mails. As Strauss and Corbin (1990:97) state, "open coding fractures the data and allows one to identify some categories, their properties, and dimensional locations."

The third stage of analysis involved the grounded theory technique of axial coding, which involved "relating subcategories to a category" (Strauss and Corbin:114). Therefore, categories and themes of calls emerging from the data were refined during open coding, the dimensions and properties of categories were subsequently refined in axial coding. In this sense, conditions and contextual elements of categories were further refined and related to the larger category allowing greater theoretical power compared to approaches reducing data to single dimensional categories.

During immersion, open coding, and axial coding, consistent code notes and theoretical notes were used. These notes and jottings were recoded to permit ease of integration and organization. These code notes were in the form of operational notes which specified and recorded comments for subsequent analysis and subsequent confirmation. Code notes and theoretical notes, as noted by Strauss and Corbin (1990), are provisional, tentative, and provide for the consistent application of definitions and categories to increase reliability and validity.

Coding of the BackTalk calls and Letters to the Editor themes was performed by the authors. Five trained research assistants coded the directions (positive, neutral or negative) of the themes expressed. Reliability was addressed by examining inter-rater reliability between the coders in the study. From a random sample of 200 calls selected from BackTalk, and from a random sample of 50 letters from Letters To The Editor, the authors recoded each others work. A coefficient of reliability of .75 was found for the BackTalk calls, and a coefficient of reliability of .72 was found for the letters to the editor for theme coding. The coefficients of reliability for the direction of the themes for BackTalk calls and Letters was .89 and .88, respectively.

We considered the reliability coefficients for theme coding to be at an acceptable level. A higher interrater reliability coefficient would have been obtained if fewer categories, and fewer attributes for each of the categories had been implemented. Scott (1955) notes that content analysis methodologies suffer from this effect. Notwithstanding, to ensure maximum reliability the authors then implemented collaborative coding to minimize coding discrepancies. This allowed for a more consistent application of coding rules where questions regarding differences in coding themes arose.[3]

FINDINGS

Research Question #1: *Are the thematic areas addressed by callers similar to those addressed by letter writers?*

Open coding determined the presence and range of themes present in the published calls. Through open coding a total of 188 themes were identified across the entire year. As open coding progressed it was noted that there were several large and related themes present. Researchers did not collapse categories during data immersion or open coding since the purpose was to generate categories and themes rather than to limit that number. As can be expected, a number of the themes were conceptually related or associated.

---

[3] Collaborative coding involved the authors revisiting calls and letters where discrepancies were found to have occurred in original coding values to seek mutual agreement on the most appropriate coding selection.

During the next stage, axial coding conceptual labels or tags were created which united a number of categories. The 188 original themes were reduced into 32 themes. In some cases, broad conceptual labels were created to capture the range of related topics. In other cases, some categories or themes were sufficiently numerous or conceptually distinct to justify a separate category. Each of the 32 categories were written on index cards. This allowed the categories and themes to be shuffled and rearranged on the work surface. Conceptual linkages were made between categories. In this sense, the dimensional attributes of various categories were identified. In the final analysis, BackTalk calls could be reduced to 12 general thematic categories (See APPENDIX A for definitions of the thematic categories).

Once completed, a content analysis of the 240 letters was undertaken, and coded according to their fit in the 12 themes. Then a comparison was made on the degree of similarity between phone-mail and letters to the editor.

As noted in Table 1, Municipal Concerns were, far and above, most frequently cited by both callers (35.7%) and letter writers (30.4%). Three categories were shared by both calls and letters as representing the themes most frequently addressed. Municipal concerns, social values & civic responsibility and national politics represented 61% of the BackTalk themes addressed, and accounted for 63% of the themes addressed in letters.

Two categories, social values & civic responsibility (9.3%) and media concerns (5.7%), account for the significant thematic difference between the Letters and BackTalk columns. The difference between Letters and BackTalk in the social values & civic responsibility category may be attributed to the nature of BackTalk, where phone-mail encourages caller input to be more immediate, direct, less deliberative and issue focused. Consequently, callers are less inclined to express concerns about appropriate behavior, civic pride or community altruism. The BackTalk format also encourages the higher percentage of media concerns. In many instances callers' media concerns are directed at taking issue with *Sun* stories published the same day.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The content themes in both the BackTalk and Letters columns focused on local events with few references to economic, social, or political events outside of the Lowell area with the exception of national political communiques addressing the allegations of sexual improprieties by President Clinton. BackTalk issues generating the most discourse included: taxes, President Clinton, public safety issues, and problems with a local water district. Issues generating the most discourse for letters were taxes, President Clinton, public safety, and locally relevant education issues. BackTalk issues tended to be more immediate, concerning day-to-day living, and personalized for the individuals contacting the newspaper. Sometimes humorous, these calls often possessed an "edge" or "bite" in the positions taken. Letters, in contrast, were more bland, and lacked the "edge".

Research Question #2: *What is the distribution of communities representing callers and letter writers?*

In total, 30 communities were represented in BackTalk calls, and 21 communities were represented in the Letters column. Five communities accounted for 76% of the combined total of calls and letters received (See Table 2)

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

There appears to be no significant difference among the five communities regarding the distribution of calls and letters. Even though 13 times more BackTalk calls than letters are received by the *Sun*, the same five communities closely represent the majority from where reader input is generated for both calls and letters (BackTalk = 75.8 and Letters = 82.5%). Lowell's representation is roughly comparable in both columns, with Dracut (12.6%) a distant second with calls, and Chelmsford (12.9%) a distant second with letters. A caller's community could not be identified in only

8.4% (N= 269) of the cases. The *Sun's* Letters to the Editor policy requires all writers to be identified, listing their community.

If, as noted earlier, letter writers traditionally represent a demographically higher status group, we might expect to find differences in the proportion of calls-to-letters in the various communities. For example, a community with a general population higher in socio-economic status (SES) might be expected to reflect a higher share of its citizens' *Sun* communiques in the form of letters rather than calls. Conversely, a community with a general population lower in SES might be expected to reflect a higher share of phone-mail as the vehicle of reader input to the paper.

This expectation is not supported among the five communities when they are compared on selected demographic characteristics pertaining to SES. This is especially noticeable when Lowell and Westford are compared. Both Lowell and Westford exhibit somewhat similar proportions of calls to letters in the *Sun* (Table 3). Lowell and Westford share little else, however, in several important demographic characteristics. Of the five communities, Lowell has the highest percentage of the population, 25 years and older, lacking a high school diploma (34%); Westford has the lowest percentage (10%). Lowell's 25 years and older population holding a bachelor's degree (16%) is the lowest. At 39%, Westford's population has the highest. Only 23% of Lowell's inhabitants, 16 years and older, are in managerial or professional positions. In Westford, twice as many in the same population category hold managerial or professional positions (45%). The median household income (1989) in Lowell is $29,351, and in Westford it is $60,566. In 1990 Lowell had 15% of its population receiving public assistance. Only 3% were receiving public assistance in Westford (U S Bureau of the Census, 1990).

Billerica's calls-to-letters distribution (89% to 11%) represents a proportion one might expect from a higher SES community like Westford. While closer to Westford with the number of citizens lacking a high school diploma (15%), it is second to Lowell of the five communities in the fewest number of citizens holding a bachelor's degree (20%). Managerial and professional positions are held by 27% of the Billerica general population 16 years of age and older. Again, Billerica's percentage follows Lowell's as the second lowest of the five communities. Billerica's median household income ($50,210 in 1989) was roughly $10,000 less than Westford's (U S Bureau of the Census, 1990).

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

Research Question #3: *Compared to letter writers, are callers more negative when expressing their opinions on public matters?*

Prior research shows that, traditionally, letters to the editor tend to be more negative than positive (Foster and Frederick, 1937; Grey and Brown, 1970). This negativity reflects the "safety valve" function (Forsythe, 1950; Davis and Rarick, 1964; Buell, 1975), whereby letters allow readers to blow off steam about concerns on their mind.

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

As illustrated in Table 4, the safety valve component is apparent for both calls and letters. Furthermore, negative messages are more frequent with the BackTalk calls. The statistically significant higher percentage of negative calls may be intrinsic to phone-mail as a medium of discourse. There is an immediacy with which readers express disapproval on subjects, and an absence of the "cooling down" period available in the process of composing and then mailing a letter. Also, the parsimony required of phone-mail calls lends itself to a more direct approach, wherein callers, by necessity, are more compelled to express inarticulate grievances. The time taken to write a letter permits a better selection of words and phrases which can sometimes hide a writer's negativism.

Telephone interviews and follow up e-mail communications were also conducted with the editors responsible for the publication of the BackTalk and Letters to The Editor columns. These contacts provided opportunities to confirm category themes from communiques developed from coding as well as understand editorial policies for selection of phone-mails and letters to be published. While these contacts did not provide insights into "writer" motivation and profiles of writers, the dialogue did clarify newspaper policies, and what types of communiques are more likely to be printed.

The *Sun* receives approximately 12 to 15 letters per week, with most published on Sunday. Every attempt is made to publish all letters received. However, libelous and hate letters are eliminated. Letters must be signed, and may be edited for length (Like most papers, letters are limited to 200 words). No deliberate attempt is made to change a letters intent.

The editor responsible for the BackTalk confirmed (1999) specific observations and guidelines pertaining to the operation of BackTalk column. The *Sun* introduced BackTalk about four years ago and, to the column editor's knowledge, is one of three newspapers in Massachusetts with a phone-mail column. Calls and e-mails combined, BackTalk receives approximately 100 communiques a week, with the majority (approximately 80%) in the form of phone-mail. BackTalk is kept short, using one or two sentences for most items. Due to the anonymity of the call, citizens feel free to express their opinions and concerns on any topic. It is estimated that about 40% of the phone-mail is from repeat callers.

All topics are eligible for inclusion provided they are not libelous, slanderous, or hate oriented. Calls are edited for grammar, sentence structure, and the elimination of vulgarity, with the aim of preserving the communicators intent. Efforts are made to publish calls reflecting the proportion of topics addressed from the calls received. The *Sun* accepts BackTalk calls from citizens of any community. They are usually published within two working days after receipt. Letters are usually published within a week.

CONCLUSION

If the Lowell *Sun* is any measure, phone-mail columns are very popular among readers. The extent to which phone-mail encourages such a large number of readers to express opinions on a wide variety of topics is significant. Thirteen times more calls than letters were published in the *Sun*. If the number of published calls were adjusted to eliminate the estimated 40% repeat callers, eight times more calls than letters still would be published. From volume alone, the topics addressed in BackTalk are salient concerns in people's lives. Calls and letters columns are not intended to be representative measures of public opinion, but they are measures representing public opinion.

Phone-mail allows readers to vent their feelings and thoughts almost immediately. Its speed and easy access to the newspaper contributes to a significantly higher frequency in negative calls, and this appears to be its biggest shortcoming. The higher frequency of negative calls re-enforces the widespread belief that callers, like letter writers, are atypical, politically motivated, and some times eccentric (Buell, 1975; Volgy, Krigbaum, Langan, and Moshier, 1977). More research focusing on callers is suggested before definite conclusions are drawn in this regard.

The anonymity of BackTalk calls should be viewed as a plus, Anonymity creates a social equality for callers. Time, effort, and sophisticated communication skills are not required to have one's opinion about a matter published. A janitor's opinion is given equal consideration with that of a lawyer. Also, there is reason to believe that reluctance to treat anonymous newspaper phone-mail seriously may be an over reaction. From their study of identity concealment in letters to the editor, Saks amd Ostrom conclude that desire for anonymity is, not limited geographically, not issue-specific, and probably based on solid attitudinal reasons (1973). At this time there is no reason to suggest otherwise with callers.

Overall, differences between BackTalk calls and letters to the editor were not dramatic. Among the 12 thematic categories, two areas accounted for the major differences in themes addressed. They were the higher percentage of social value and civic responsibility communications by letter writers, and the higher percentage of concerns about selected *Sun* stories (media concerns) expressed by BackTalk callers. Contributors to both columns focused on roughly the same locally relevant issues. The representation of communities served by the *Sun* was similarly distributed. The distribution of calls to letters from the communities were, likewise, similar, regardless of social demographic differences.

Increased utilization of new technology such as e-mail and voice-mail, which allows opinions to be more easily submitted to newspaper editors will broaden the popularity of reader input. Implications for public discourse in the democratic process are most encouraging.

NEWSPAPER LETTERS AND PHONE-MAIL TO THE EDITOR: A COMPARISON OF READER INPUT

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bakke, John W. 1996. "Technologies and Interpretations: The Case of the Telephone." *Knowledge and Society* 10:87-107.

Berman, Jerry and Daniel J. Witzner. 1997. "Technology and Democracy." *Social Research* 64:1313-1320.

Berg, Bruce, L. 1998. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 3rd. Ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Buell, Emmett H. 1975. "Eccentrics or Gladiators? People Who Write about Politics in Letters to the Editor." *Social Science Quarterly* 56:440-449.

Chaffee, Steven and Stacey Frank. 1996. "How Americans Get Political Information: Print Versus Broadcast News." *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 546:48-58.

Cherry, Colin.1977. "The Telephone System: Creator of Mobility and Social Change." pp.112-126 in *The Social Impact of the Telephone*, edited by Ithiel de Sola Pool. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Davis, Hal, and Galen Rarick. 1964. "Functions of Editorials and Letters to the Editor." *Journalism Quarterly* 41:108-109.

Alexis de Tocqueville [1835] 1967. *Democracy in America*. Vol 2. Translated by Henry Reeve. Reprint, New York; Schocken Books.

Denzin, Norman, K. (1989). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, 3rd. ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Deutschmann, Paul J. 1959. *News-Page Content of Twelve Metropolitan Dailies*. Cincinnati, OH:Scripps-Howard Research.

Dupre Michael E. and Mackey David A. (1998). "The Original Chat Room: Letters to the Editor as a Measure of Crime Salience." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society, March, 1998, Philadelphia, PA.

Editor and Publisher (1995). "A Barometer." 128:6.

Einsiedel, Edna F., Kandice L. Salomone, and Frederick P. Schneider. 1984. "Crime: Effects of Media Exposure and Personal

Experience on Issue Salience." *Journalism Quarterly* 61:131-136.

Forsythe, Sydney A. 1950. "An Exploratory Study of Letters to the Editor and Their Contributors." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 14:141-144.

Fitzgerald, Mark. 1994. "What Consumers Read in Newspapers." *Editor and Publisher* 127:10.

Foster, H. Schuyler, Jr., and Carl J. Friedrich. 1937. "Letters to the Editor as a Means of Measuring the Effectiveness of Propaganda." *American Political Science Review* 31:71-79.

Gale Directory of Publication and Broadcast Media, Vol I. 1999. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Group.

Graber, Doris A. 1980. *Crime News and the Public*. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Grey, David L. and Trevor R. Brown. 1970. "Letters to the Editor: Hazy Reflections of Public Opinion." *Journalism Quarterly* 47: 450-471.

Groper, Richard. 1996. "Electronic Mail and the Reinvigoration of American Democracy." *Social Science Computer Review* 14: 157-168.

Guo, Zhongshi, and Patricia Moy. 1998. "Medium or Message? Predicting Dimensions of Political Sophistication." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 10: 25-50.

Hill, David B. 1981. "Letter Opinion on the ERA: A Test of the Newspaper Bias Hypothesis." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 45:384-392.

Holsti, Ole R. 1969. *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Hunter, James H.., Jr. 1995. "A Primer on Call-in Columns." *Editor and Publisher* 28:56+.

Hynds, Ernest C. 1994. "Editors at Most U.S. Dailies See Vital Roles for Editorial Page." *Journalism Quarterly* 71:573-583.

Ippolito, Dennis S., Thomas G.Walker, and Kenneth L. Kolson. 1976. *Public Opinion and Responsible Democracy*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Lambkin, David.P., and R.H. Morneau, Jr., 1988. "How Police are Viewed in Editorials and Letters to the Editor: An Analysis of Themes." *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 16:195-197.

Lowell Sun BackTalk Editor. 1999. Personal Communication, September 1999.

Meyrowitz, Joshua. 1985. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Noack, David. 1994. "Letters to the Editor Via E-Mail." *Editor and Publisher* 127:40+.

Pritchard, David, and Dan Berkowitz. 1991. "How Readers' Letters May Influence Editors and News Emphasis: A Content Analysis of 10 Newspapers, 1948-1978." *Journalism Quarterly* 68:388-395.

Pool, Ithiel de Sol. 1983. *Technologies of Freedom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Renfro, Paula Cozort. 1979. "Bias in Selection in Letters to the Editor." *Journalism Quarterly* 56:822-826.

Robinson, John P. and Mark R. Levy. 1996. "News Media Use and the Informed Public: A 1990s Update." *Journal of Communication* 46:129-135.

Saks, Michael J. and Thomas M. Ostrom. 1973. "Anonymity in Letters to the Editor." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 37:417-422.

Scott, William A. 1955. "Reliability of Content Analysis: The Case of Nominal Scale Coding." *Public Opinion Quarterly* Fall:321-323.

Sigelman, Lee, and Barbara J. Walkosz. 1992. "Letters to the Editor as a Public Opinion Thermometer: The Martin Luther King Holiday Vote in Arizona." *Social Science Quarterly* 73:938-946.

Stempel, Guido H., III. 1981. "Content Analysis." in *Research Methods in Mass Communication*, Guido H. Stempel, III and Bruce H. Westley (eds.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet Corbin. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Tarrant, William D. 1957. "Who Writes Letters to the Editor?" *Journalism Quarterly* 34:501-502.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1990. *U S Census Data, Database 1990: C90STF3A* [On-line]. Available: http://venus.census.gov/cdrom/lookup.

Vacin, Gary. 1965. "A Study of Letter-Writers." *Journalism Quarterly* 42:464-465, 510.

Volgy, Thomas, Margaret Krigbaum, Mary Kay Langan, and Vicky Moshier. 1977. "Some of My Best Friends Are Letter Writers: Eccentrics and Gladiators Revisited." *Social Science Quarterly* 58:321-327.

Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin. 1999. "Letters to the Editor." *Peace Review* 11:53-59.

NEWSPAPER LETTERS AND PHONE-MAIL TO THE EDITOR: A COMPARISON OF READER INPUT

APPENDIX A - THEMATIC CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS

VALUE	NAME	CATEGORY DESCRIPTION
1	Social Values and Civic Responsibility	Involves issues on a continuum of public civility. Issues include (dis)order, social civility, appropriate behavior, civic pride, and altruism, parental responsibility, vets, God, country, cemetery care, flag respect, physical and social disorder, Samaritans, and professional helpers.
2	Municipal Concerns	Involves issues related to local politics (officials and issues),public safety (road conditions, bridges, traffic, lights, plowing), local taxes, water, sewer, growth issues (traffic, old/new residents, development),schools budgets, contracts, uniforms, educational issues such as testing and curriculum, student issues), and informational.
3	Leisure, Culture, and Entertainment	Issues include shows/ concerts, arenas, parks, theaters, mass entertainment(cable), professional sports, athletes, celebrities, gambling, and adult entertainment.
4	Equity & Social Justice Concerns	Concerns involve perceptions of fairness and equal treatment. Issues include gender discrimination, lawsuits, substandard or assisted housing, and worker/CEO equity.
5	National Politics	Issues include democrats, republicans, the Clintons, Monica Lewinsky, Starr, impeachment, Hyde, Tripp, Meehan.

6	State Politics	Issues include govenor's race and campaign issues. Patriots move to Conn.
7	Crime and Justice Concerns	Issues include police, courts, corrections, general crime concerns, juvenile crime concerns, specific crime concerns, laws and individual rights.
8	Youth Issues and Concerns	involves issues immediately relevant or affecting youth, not included are educational issues or crime. Issues include: curfew, boy scouts, driving, school and community sports.
9	Senior Concerns	involves issues immediately relevant or affecting older residents. Issues include social sec, driving, and housing.
10	Media Concerns	involves reaction to or comments about media coverage, articles, columns, policy, or trends.
11	Human Interest & General Society	Concerns emotional or touching themes. Issues include animals, John Glenn's flight.
12	Other	High tech, international, miscelaneous.

Table 1. Comparative Distribution of Themes Addressed in the BackTalk and Letters-to-the-Editor Columns in The Lowell, MA *Sun*, 1998.

Themes	BackTalk (%)	Letters-to-the-Editor (%)
Municipal Concerns	35.7	30.4
Social Values & Civic Responsibility	13.2	22.5
National Politics	12.5	10.4
Media Concerns	10.7	5.0
Leisure, Culture & Entertainment	7.4	5.8
Crime & Justice concerns	6.0	5.8
Equity & Social Justice	4.3	6.3
Youth Issues and Concerns	2.6	1.3
State Politics	2.3	1.7
Human Interest & General Society	2.2	4.6
Senior Concerns	1.4	0.4
Other	1.7	5.8
Totals	100%	100%
	N = 3185	N = 240

Note: The categories of Media Concerns, Youth Issues and Concerns, State Politics, Human Interest & General Society, and Senior Concerns were combined with the Other category for χ^2 calculations.

$\chi^2 = 19.452$ with 6 *df* ($p < .01$)

Because χ^2 may indicate a significance with a weak relationship in large samples, a 10% representative sample of BackTalks (N=319) was compared to Letters-to-the-Editor. $\chi^2 = 15.050$ with 6 *df* ($p < .05$)

Table 2. Comparative Distribution of Communities Represented in the BackTalk and Letters-to-the-Editor Columns in The Lowell, MA *Sun*, 1998.

Communities Represented	BackTalk (%)	Letters-to-the-Editor (%)
Lowell (103,439)[a]	38.8%	37.9%
Billerica (37,609)	6.8%	11.3%
Chelmsford (32,375)	10.3%	12.9%
Dracut (25,594)	12.6%	11.7%
Westford (16,402)	7.3%	8.8%
Other Communities	15.8%	17.5%
Not Identified	8.4%	---
TOTALS	100% N=3,185	100.1% N=240

[a] Population size in 1990 (U S Bureau of the Census, 1990).

$\chi^2 = 6.665$ with 5 *df* ($p > .10$)

For a 10% representative sample of BackTalks (N=319) compared to Letters-to-the-Editor: $\chi^2 = 3.327$ with 5 *df* ($p > .10$)

Table 3. Comparative Distribution of BackTalk calls to Letters-to-the-Editor by Town in The Lowell, MA *Sun*, 1998.

Community	BackTalk (%)	Letters-to-the-Editor (%)
Lowell	93%	7%
Billerica	89%	11%
Chelmsford	91%	9%
Dracut	94%	6%
Westford	92%	8%
Other Communities	92%	8%
TOTALS	93% N=3,185	7% N=240

Table 4. Comparison of BackTalk and Letters-to-the-Editor regarding the Positive or Negative Direction of Expressed Concerns in The Lowell, MA *Sun*, 1998.

Direction of Concern	BackTalk (%)	Letters-to-the-Editor (%)
Negative	73.0%	61.7%
Neutral	8.9%	12.9%
Positive	18.1%	25.4%
Total	100% N=3185	100% N=240

χ^2 = 14.406 with 2 *df* (*p* <.01)

For a 10% representative sample of BackTalks (N=319) compared to Letters-to-the-Editor: χ^2 = 13.120 with 2 *df* (*p* <.01)

MC+S

Economic Literacy and News Interest

by

Lowndes F. Stephens
Professor
College of Journalism and Mass Communications
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
(803) 777-2974
email: stephens-lowndes@sc.edu

Paper presented at the 2000 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) Convention, Mass Communication and Society Division, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Phoenix, Arizona, August 9, 2000

Economic Literacy and News Interest

Abstract

Paper presented at the 2000 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) Convention, Mass Communication and Society Division, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Phoenix, Arizona, August 9, 2000

Lowndes F. Stephens
Professor
College of Journalism and Mass Communications
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
(803) 777-2974
email: stephens-lowndes@sc.edu

The National Council on Economic Education, the Federal Reserve, the U.S. Department of Education (Goals 2000 Educate American Act) and other organizations are promoting economic literacy. In this investigation the author tests, and finds support for, two hypotheses (using a random telephone survey sample of 369 residents in a Southern metropolitan area) – that interest in economic, business, and personal finance news is strongly and positively correlated with *economic literacy*, and with estimated *financial net worth*.

Economic Literacy and News Interest

Paper submitted for presentation at the 2000 AEJMC Convention, Mass Communication and Society Division

Lowndes F. Stephens
Professor
College of Journalism and Mass Communications
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
(803) 777-2974
email: stephens-lowndes@sc.edu

The National Council on Economic Education, the Federal Reserve, the U.S. Department of Education (Goals 2000 Educate America Act) and other organizations are promoting economic literacy. The Goals 2000 Educate America Act encourages instruction in economics for elementary and secondary school students. The National Council on Economic Education has developed a set of voluntary content standards for pre-college economic education [1] and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis is sponsoring a national economic literacy campaign.[2] The news media and journalism schools have been encouraged by the Federal Reserve to devote more resources to the coverage of economic news and to encourage specializations in economics reporting. [3]

---

[1] John J. Siegfried and Bonnie T. Meszaros, "National Voluntary Content Standards for Pre-College Economics Education," *American Economic Review* 87 (2):247-253 (May, 1997).

Business and personal finance news is widely available today, especially in advanced industrial societies with mature equity markets. These national economic literacy campaigns are depending on the mass media and the specialized media to "deliver the message" that economic literacy is in one's self interest as well as in the national interest. Grunig's seminal work on communication strategies for economic education programs [4] alerted public relations practitioners to the importance of tailoring media messages to the issue-concerns of target audiences. In this study the author examines levels of economic literacy, estimates of financial net worth and asks if differences in economic news interest is associated with these two variables.

---

[2] Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, "Economic Literacy Survey," http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us/pubs/region/98-12/survey.html, *The Region* December (December, 1998). (3/14/99)

[3] See Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, "Economic Literacy Action Steps," *The Region* 13 (2):8-9 (June, 1999) and Paul Eisenberg, "Media Urged to Help Close Financial Literacy Gap," *The Freedom Forum and Newseum News* 6 (5):7 (May, 1999).

[4] James E. Grunig, "Developing Economic Education Programs for the Press," *Public Relations Review* 8 (3):43-62 (Fall, 1982).

LITERATURE ON ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE AND ECONOMIC NEWS EXPOSURE, HYPOTHESES

Haller and Norpoth's (1997) [5] secondary analysis of two items in "The Survey of Consumers" national sample, conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, leads them to conclude that about half the American public admit getting no economic news. Yet, many of these people (who get little or no economic news) express sentiments about the state of the national economy, sentiments that are very similar to the views expressed by those who report getting a lot of economic news. The authors look at monthly survey data from 1978-90. Opinion holding, or the willingness to express opinions about the condition of the national economy, is not constrained by lack of economic news. The authors conclude that one's personal financial situation, viz. personal economic reality, is used as the frame of reference for developing opinions about the state of the national economy.

Adoni and Cohen (1978) [6] interviewed 532 Jewish adults during a period of economic turmoil in Israel. They found, consistent with Grunig's expectation, that Israelis had more objective economic knowledge about economic issues that directly affect their personal economic well-being. For example, they had a better understanding of the meaning of the concepts "cost-of-living index," "cost-of-living allowance," "black capital" (undeclared income)," and the "value added tax" than they did of other concepts (i.e., the meaning of "rate of currency exchange," "currency devaluation," "gross domestic product," and "balance of payments.") These authors say, however, that overall, levels of objective economic knowledge were very low and that only one-third of their sample believed they understood the public policy debates surrounding domestic economic issues in Israel at the time. Especially women and low-SES respondents sited television as an important source of economic news. These respondents were more likely to overestimate their level of objective economic knowledge and their subjective understanding of national economic affairs.

---

[5] H. Brandon Haller and Helmut Norpoth, "Reality Bites: News Exposure and Economic Opinion," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61 (4):555-576 (Winter, 1997).

The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis sponsored a national economic knowledge test in December 1998.[7] In a national telephone survey conducted by the Minnesota Center for Survey Research (sampling error of plus or minus 5 percent) 404 respondents were asked 13 multiple-choice, knowledge questions. The average percent correct was 45%. Approximately 56% of these respondents had taken an economics course either in high school or college and they scored significantly higher (12% points higher) than those respondents who had not taken an economics course. [8]

---

[6] Hanna Adoni and Akiba A. Cohen, "Television Economic News and the Social Construction of Economic Reality," *Journal of Communication* 28 (4):61-70 (Autumn, 1978).

[7] Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, "Economic Literacy Survey," http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us/pubs/region/98-12/survey.html, *The Region* December (December, 1998). (3/14/99)

[8] William Walstad and Ken Rebeck, "How Does Economic Education Impact Economic Literacy," *Region (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis)* 13 (2):18-21 (June, 1999).

The slant or tone of economic news may influence sentiment and objective knowledge acquisition. Pruitt and Hoffer (1989) [9] looked at the "slant" of macroeconomic news coverage in national news outlets and studied the impact of that slant on consumer confidence. They selected 36 news stories about the monthly unemployment report released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These stories appeared on the *CBS Evening News*, in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. In an experimental study involving 120 undergraduate students, the authors stripped these stories of temporal and context cues and used them as stimulus material. Students read the stories and, after reading each story, they were asked to complete a consumer confidence question modeled after the "Consumer Sentiment Survey" (University of Michigan Survey Research Center). The authors found that Ss considered coverage of the unemployment reports by the *CBS Evening News* to be the most pessimistic and confusing. Coverage in *The Wall Street Journal* was judged the least confusing and the most balanced. The authors also found that the level of consumer confidence varied depending on the news story used as the frame of reference for judging the significance of the unemployment statistics. Raaij (1989: 474) argues that the news narrative for economic news affects the interpretation of economic reality [10]:

> Rather than stating that a recent change or event is a temporary deviation from the normal situation (regressive prediction), these changes or events

---

[9] Stephen W. Pruitt and George E. Hoffer, "Economic News As a Consumer Product: An Analysis of the Effects of Alternative Media Sources on the Formation of Consumer Economic Expectations," *Journal of Consumer Policy* 12 (1):59-69 (March, 1989).

[10] W. Fred Van Raaij, "Economic News, Expectations and Macro-Economic Behaviour," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 10:473-493 (1989).

> are reported as an indication of the development or the aggravation of a trend (anti-regressive). Reporters tend to focus on the facts that suggest such a development should have happened...as a negative effect, the press can thus speed commercial and economic failure with reports and explanations of adverse developments...these selective attributions are not made in malice; it is part of the reporter's job to communicate information and to give causal explanations.

One economist found that television news accounts of significant macroeconomic news announcements were consistently played more prominently and were longer stories when the changes in these economic indicators were down or in a negative direction. "Bad news" commands more attention than "good news." Specifically, Harrington analyzed 12 years of coverage of stories about the unemployment rate, the CPI inflation rate and the growth rate of real GNP on the three major networks (1973-84). He (Harrington 1989:27) concludes that the networks give significantly more prominence to "bad economic news" during non-election years and a much more balanced account during presidential election years [11]:

> This pattern is remarkably stable. Using two different measures of coverage and three different economic statistics, the pattern emerges in all six cases. In addition, the differences are not trivial. For the sample used in this article, reports on the unemployment rate, the inflation rate, and the growth rate of real GNP were approximately 34% longer and twice as likely to lead the evening newscasts when these statistics were deteriorating holding other factors constant.

In the study reported on here the author develops an operational definition of economic literacy that is based on the voluntary content standards developed by the National Council on Economic Education and that reflects knowledge that is readily available in the financial press.

---

[11] David E. Harrington, "Economic News on Television: The Determinants of Coverage," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53 (1):17-40 (Spring, 1989).

H1: Interest in economic, business, and personal finance news is strongly and positively correlated with economic literacy
H2: Interest in economic, business, and personal finance news is strongly and positively correlated with high levels of estimated net worth (as defined by the authors of the best-selling book, *The Millionaire Next Door*)

SAMPLING METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Graduate students in media economics and media management classes conducted telephone interviews with 369 residents of Columbia, South Carolina, middle-school age and older, during June 1998.

The sampling frame consisted of actual residential phone numbers, randomly selected from two randomly selected zip code areas, for the City of Columbia, and random digit samples for known telephone prefixes in the city. If a RDD number was determined to be a working residential number, up to five callbacks were made. Typically, this combination of methods resulted in 150 different numbers called for every 25 completed surveys (about one in 17 different numbers resulting in a completed interview). Approximately 20 of every 150 called numbers resulted in a targeted respondent "declining to be interviewed" (about 1 in 13). The estimated response rate is 55% (i.e., approximately 55% of those screened to be interviewed, completed the interview; about 45% refused to be interviewed).

Interviewers alternated between asking for the oldest/youngest male/female in the household and were instructed to interview any person of middle-school age or older. The sampling error is ± 5.1%.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Dependent Measures

Economic Literacy. We said, "I will read to you now a few statements that MAY OR MAY NOT BE true about the state of the American economy today…First, tell me if you generally understand what the basic concept is in the statement AND THEN whether what I say about it is true … this is a fun kind of quiz." Brief explanations of the concepts were provided for the interviewers. The interviewers neglected to make detailed comments on understanding of the concept but provided overall summaries.[12] Most all the respondents understood the basic concepts. Our measure of economic literacy, a series of true and false questions, is problematic, because the concepts call for more complicated responses that are difficult to illicit in telephone interviews, and because someone has a 50% chance of guessing correctly. We summed across the five items to create an economic literacy scale. The findings are summarized in Table 1 Economic Literacy.

---

[12] Interviewers were given the following guidance regarding the meaning of the various economic terms. *Stock Market:* Respondent should indicate that stock markets exist to help companies raise money to do business; that the DJIA is a measure of how 30 "blue chip" stocks prices change over time, that it is the oldest U.S. stock index; today it stands at over 9,000. *Real GDP:* Respondent should indicate that real GDP is the measure of all goods and services produced in a country (U.S.), adjusted for inflation. *Inflation*: Respondent should indicate that inflation means the increase in prices owing to increased total spending relative to the supply of goods/services in the economy. Inflation is generally also associated with rising wages and rising costs of production, a large money supply, and a decrease in purchasing power (since prices usually rise faster than income does). Low inflation rates are good for the economy. *Government Spending*: Respondent should indicate that federal deficits mean the government is spending more than it takes in, in taxes, etc. This is bad in one sense because it sucks money from the economy that could go to the private sector as the government refinances its debt. On the other hand, the government may be investing in needed infrastructure, human capital, etc. that is good for the economy in the long run. *Personal Savings:* Respondent should indicate that savings is putting aside after-tax income for future use. Savings provides money for institutions to loan to others and allows savers to benefit from compounding of interest on savings for long-term needs that can't be met on the basis of annual earned income (e.g., college or retirement requires a lot more capital than most families can afford to pay for out of annual earnings).

Table 1 Economic Literacy

Item	Correct Response	Percent Correct	Total Respondents
The stock market, as measured by the Dow Jones Industrial Average, is at an all time high. [Note: The DJIA slipped at times below 9,000 during our interviews and some respondents noted the downturn]	True	68%	368
Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is increasing at an annual rate of somewhat more than 3% in the 1990s and by this measure the United States economy is among the most productive in the world. [Note: Interviewers said many respondents did not really understand the concept of GDP]	True	72%	369
Inflation is at about 2%, historically low. [Note: Some respondents did not understand the concept of inflation]	True	67%	367
The federal government is spending more than it takes in.	False	23%	369
Americans are saving 10% of their disposable income each year.	False	77%	369
Five-Item Summary:	*Mean: 3.043*	*Median: 3*	*STDV: 1.195*

Net Worth: We explained: "The best-selling book *THE MILLIONAIRE NEXT DOOR [Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko*, Longstreet Press, 1996) says the typical (median) household in America has a net worth of less than $15,000. About 3.5% of American households have a net worth of $1 million or more. Net worth is defined as the current value of one's assets less liabilities. We asked: "What, today, is your (the person, if a single-person household, or the household, if multi-person household) estimated net worth, based on this definition?" The interviewer recorded the number given (interval measure). This item was asked at the end of the interview. Fifty-three respondents apparently refused to answer the question and interviewers recorded the item as missing data. Another 63 (17.1%) refused to answer the question. Seventy-eight respondents (21.1%) did not know their net worth and could not estimate it. Reported estimates of net worth range from nothing to $3 million. The results of those who provided a net worth estimate are summarized in Table 2 Estimated Net Worth.

Table 2 Estimated Net Worth

Category	Cases	Percent of Total Respondents
Less than $10,000	24	14.2%
$10K-24,999	43	25.4%
$25K-49,999	14	8.3%
$50K-99,999	18	10.7%
$100K and more	70	41.4%
Mean: $157,614; Median: $50,000, SDV: $321,778; *n = 169*	*169*	*100.0%*

The Federal Reserve provides national data on family net worth. [13] The following table (Table 3 Comparisons of Net Worth Estimates With National Norms) compares the national data for 1998 with our sample data.

Table 3 Comparisons of Net Worth Estimates With National Norms

Source: Federal Reserve System 1998 Survey of Consumer Finance			**Source: Economic Literacy and Interest in Economic, Business and Personal Financial News (Columbia, SC) June 1998**		
Age	Net Worth in 1998$		Age	Net Worth in 1998$	
	Mean	Median		Mean	Median
<35	$ 65,900.00	$ 9,000.00	<35	$ 63,511.00	$ 15,001.00
35-44	$196,200.00	$ 63,400.00	35-44	$151,081.00	$ 40,000.00
45-54	$362,700.00	$ 105,500.00	45-54	$298,120.00	$200,000.00
55-64	$530,200.00	$ 127,500.00	55-64	$158,050.00	$ 90,500.00
65-74	$465,500.00	$ 146,500.00	65-74	$184,500.00	$115,000.00
75+	$310,200.00	$ 125,600.00	75+	$460,000.00	$100,000.00

---

[13] See Arthur B. Kennickell, Starr-McCluer, Martha, and Brian J. Surette, "Recent Changes in U.S. Family Finances: Results from the 1998 Survey of Consumer Finances," *Federal Reserve Bulletin* 86 (1):1-29 (January, 2000). Assets do include home equity, financial assets, and the value of retirement accounts. Liabilities do include home equity loans and mortgage loans. Some definitions of net worth do not include the value of one's principal residence or the debt associated with that residence. We did not make these fine distinctions in our definition, as we simply asked what the difference is between the current value of one's assets less liabilities. Some interviewers noted that some respondents did not understand the concept of net worth.

Net Worth Benchmarks, Wealth Scale. [Basis: Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko, *The Millionaire Next Door: The Surprising Secrets of America's Wealthy* (Atlanta, Georgia: Longstreet Press, 1996)] Marketing professors Stanley and Danko recommend norming expected net worth according to age and income, not some absolute value. The benchmark is determined by multiplying your income (pre-tax) by your age and dividing by 10 to derive an average for persons of similar age and income levels. They also derive a wealth or net worth scale based on dividing your net worth by this benchmark average. Individuals whose net worth exceeds twice the benchmark are classified as in the "Top 20% of Wealth Builders of Your Age and Income." A score of 1.5-1.99 earns the label "Potential Millionaire If 10 Years or More of Earning Capacity." Persons with a score of 1.0-1.49 are classified as "Above Average Wealth Builders." A net worth of from 50 to 99% of the benchmark (a score of 0.5-.99) means you "Spend More and Save Less than the Average American" and a score of .49 or less means you should "Cut Spending by 10%." The methodology is explained in Toney Cook, "7 Secrets to Achieve Your Money Dreams, Even on a Modest Income," *Money Magazine*, June 1997, 72-83. Here is how our respondents stack up on the wealth scale (see Table 4 Wealth Scale).

Table 4 Wealth Scale

Category	Cases	Percent
Top 20% of Wealth Builders at Your Age and Income (2 times or more of benchmark)	9	5.8%
Millionaire Potential (1.5-1.99 times benchmark)	4	2.6
Above Average Wealth Builder (1.-1.49 times benchmark)	19	12.2
Spend More and Save Less than Average American (0.5-.99 times benchmark)	28	18.0
Cut Spending by 10% (.49 or less times benchmark)	115	61.5%

These findings suggest that Americans are not saving enough to meet long-term goals such as meeting a goal of 70% of their current income during retirement. Congress passed the "Savings Are Vital to Everyone's Retirement Act of 1997" (The SAVER Act). The first National Summit on Retirement Savings was held on June 4-5, 1998 in Washington, D.C. The Summit was co-hosted by the President and the Congressional leadership in the House and Senate. The SAVER Act calls for a second Summit in 2001 and a third in 2005. The purpose of the Summit was to increase public awareness of the importance of retirement planning and to identify ways to promote greater retirement savings by all Americans. [See The National Summit on Retirement Savings homepage: http://www.saversummit.org/98summit.htm]

Independent Measures

News Interests. We asked, "Do you have an interest in news about the economy, business, personal finance, or is this kind of information not something that interests you ... would you say you have A LOT OF INTEREST, SOME INTEREST, A LITTLE, OR NO INTEREST AT ALL? About one in ten respondents (11%) said "no interest at all," 14% said a "little," 41% said "some" and 34% said "a lot."

News Sources. We asked, "Where do you get most of your news and information about the economy, business, and personal finance?" These preferences are summarized in Table 5 Sources for News About the Economy, Business, and Personal Finance.

Table 5 Sources for News About the Economy, Business, and Personal Finance

Source	Economy	Business	Personal Finance
Internet	2.7%	3.0%	6.1%
Newspapers	38.7	47.5	28.5
None	1.4	4.6	6.9
Other	7.4	10.1	35.7
Radio	3.5	1.1	1.4
TV	46.3	33.6	21.6

While newspapers and television are especially important sources of news about these matters, respondents rely mostly on other sources for personal finance news (e.g., stockbrokers, magazines, relatives, etc.).

We also asked, "Do you have one particular source of news on these matters that you rely on most? (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal,* "Wall Street Week" on public television, CNBC cable news). Two hundred and thirty-two respondents (232) named specific sources. One hundred and thirty-four (134) or 36% of the respondents said they do not rely on a particular source. Among those designating a particular source, most rely on the local Knight-Ridder daily newspaper *The State* (63, or 27%), *The Wall Street Journal* (28 or 12%) and CNN (25 or 11%). The only other local source mentioned was the NBC-affiliated TV station, WIS-TV (10 or 4%). Twelve named CNBC (5%), seven said the Internet (3%) and six said *USA Today* (3%).

Other Relevant Measures

Need for Economics Instruction. We asked, "The Goals 2000 Educate America Act (1994) requires that elementary and secondary school students get instruction in economics. Is that a subject -- economics -- that you think children and adults should study in school ... would you say YES, NO, DON'T KNOW, or DON'T YOU HAVE AN OPINION ON THAT? Almost 90% (330) of the respondents said "yes" and only 8% (28) said "no."

Personal Background in Economics Education. We asked, "How about you ... have you ever taken a course in economics ... YES, NO, DON'T REMEMBER. About seven in ten respondents have had a course in economics (253 or 69%); 110 have not (30%).

Demographic Measures

Age. The median age of our respondents is 41 (mean is 43.04, SDV is 17.73). The range is from 10 to 94. About 8% (29) of the respondents are from 10-18 years of age. About one in five (72) are under the age of 25 and 15% (56) are 65 years of age or older. The age distribution is shown in Table 6 Summary Demographic Characteristics of Sample.

Gender. Two-thirds of the respondents are women (64%).

Education. We asked, "What is the highest level of formal schooling you have completed?" LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL, SOME COLLEGE, BA DEGREE, MA DEGREE, Ph.D. or PROFESSIONAL DEGREE. Approximately 45% (167) of the respondents are college graduates. Only seven percent had not completed high school. [14]

---

[14] It is important to note that our sample is better educated than the population of the state and nation as a whole; moreover we find no significant race differences in the education levels of respondents 25 years of age and older (e.g., 51% of whites and 51% of non-whites over the age of 25 are college graduates). *The Chronicle of Higher Education 1997-98 Almanac*, reflecting 1990 census data, shows that 20.3% of the nation's adult population (25 and over) are college graduates; in South Carolina it is 16.6%. Whites report higher levels of income in

Race. We asked, "Do you consider yourself to be WHITE, Non-Hispanic Descent, AFRICAN-AMERICAN, HISPANIC Origin, ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDERS, AMERICAN INDIAN/ESKIMO/ALEUT, Bi-Racial or Multi-Racial, or OTHER. About 70% of the respondents (257) are White.

Income. We asked, "Finally, what today is your (the person, if a single-person household, or the household) estimated gross income before taxes?" Interviewers were also instructed as follows: If *respondent is unclear what is meant by gross income, say* your household's adjusted gross Form 1040 federal income for calendar year 1997. If s/he refuses to give a gross estimate, ask, "Would you tell me, which of the following income categories includes your estimated gross income?" About 40% of those responding provided ordinal measures of income. We took the midpoint of the designated scale. Sixty-four respondents (17%) refused to answer the question; 22 did not know the answer (6%). Missing data accounted for 8% of the cases (31). The average income is $55,004; the median is $35,000 (SDV is $156,851). The range is from no income to $2.4 million.

These demographic characteristics are show in Table 6 Summary Demographic Characteristics of Sample.

---

our sample (average for whites is $64,152 and $36,594 for non-whites) but the differences are not statistically significant (t = 1.286, df = 239, p = .198). On the other hand, among adults age 25 and over, whites report significantly more income. For example, 16% of white adults report making more than $100,000 a year, compared to only 2% of adults who are non-white. Nevertheless, we find significant race differences in estimated net worth. Whites report an average net worth of $196,196 and non-whites $75,448 (t = 3.208, df = 141.19, p = .002).

Table 6 Summary Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Variable	Value	Cases	Percent
Age	Less than 35	124	34.0
	35-44	81	22.2
	45-54	64	17.5
	55-64	44	12.1
	65-74	31	8.5
	75 and more	21	5.8
Gender	Female	235	63.9
	Male	133	36.1
Education	Less than High School	27	7.3
Note: 51% of those 25 years of age and older are college graduates.	High School Diploma	72	19.5
	Some College	103	27.9
	College Graduate	94	25.5
	MA or Equivalent	64	17.3
	Ph.D. or Equivalent	9	2.4
Race	Asian/Pacific Islander	3	0.8
	African-American	87	23.6
	American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut	2	0.5
	Bi-Racial or Multiracial	4	1.1
	Hispanic	7	1.9
	Other	9	2.4
	White	257	69.7
Income	Less than $10,000	14	5.8
	$10,000-24,999	54	22.4
	$25,000-49,999	98	40.7
	$50,000-99,999	48	19.9
	$100,000 or more	27	11.2

FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1. Interest in economic, business, and personal finance news *is* strongly and positively correlated with economic literacy. The complete crosstab table with six levels of economic literacy (from 0 to 5 items correct) and four levels of interest (not at all, a little, some, and a lot) resulted in a significant chi-square test result (χ^2 = 46.71, df = 15, p=.000). For example, 44% of those who got none of the economic literacy questions correct have no interest at all in news about the economy, business and personal finance. On the other hand, 46% of those who got all five items correct have a lot of interest in this kind of news. Some of these cells had fewer than five cases, so we collapsed the two measures based on a median split for the economic literacy measure and two levels of news interest ("low" equating to no interest at all or a little interest and "high" equating to some or a lot of interest). Here are the results (Table 7 Interest in Economic, Business, Personal Finance News and Economic Literacy).

Table 7 Interest in Economic, Business, Personal Finance News and Economic Literacy

Economic Literacy	High Interest	Low Interest	Totals
Above Median	59.2% (116)	34.8% (23)	53.1% (139)
Below Median	40.8% (80)	65.2% (43)	46.9% (123)
Totals	100.0% (196)	100.0% (66)	100.0% (262)

χ^2 = 11.74, df = 1, p=.001)

Hypothesis 2. Support for hypothesis two (the association between news interest and estimates of net worth) is somewhat strong. Multiple means tests show that respondents with "a lot" of interest in news about the economy, business, and personal finance report significantly higher levels of estimated net worth than respondents who indicate "no interest at all" or "some interest" in this kind of news (see Table 8 Interest in Economic, Business, Personal Finance News and Estimates of Net Worth). Those with "some" interest also report significantly higher levels of net worth than those with "no interest at all." The other means tests are not significant.

Table 8 Interest in Economic, Business, Personal Finance News and Estimates of Net Worth

Comparison Groups	Average Net Worth	T-Value	df	p
A "Lot of Interest"	$244,290			
B "Some Interest"	$116,085			
C "Little Interest"	$146,454			
D "No Interest at All"	$44,333			
A versus B		1.990	73.71	.050
A versus D		3.236	62.58	.002
B versus D		2.527	75.10	.014

DISCUSSION

Relative Importance of News Interest as Explanatory Variable. Certainly, media consumers can learn important things about the economy, business, and personal finance by reading, watching, listening, and interacting with the news in newspapers, magazines, on television, radio, and the Internet. They also learn from interaction with others and from the "school of hard knocks." A more comprehensive regression analysis shows that other obvious factors explain more variation in economic literacy and net worth than does interest in news about these matters. We regressed age, net worth, income, news interest, education, gender (dummy variable), and race (dummy variable) on our measure of economic literacy. The best model (F = 22.416, with 3 and 360 df, p = .000), explaining 15% (adjusted R-Square) of the variation in literacy, includes education (ß = .282), age (ß = .179), and gender (ß = .164). The higher the level of formal education and the older the respondent, the more likely s/he is to score high on the literacy measures. Men do significantly better than woman on the economic literacy measures. Men averaged 3.33 items correct and women 2.88 correct (t = 3.557, df. = 366, p = .003). We also regressed economic literacy, age, income, news interest, education, gender, and race (dummy variable) on estimates of net worth. The best model (F = 21.400, with 3 and 154 df, p = .000), explaining 29% (adjusted R-Square) of the variation in estimates of net worth, includes income (ß = .422), education (ß = .245), and age (ß = .233). Summarizing, age, education, income, and gender are the most important predictors of economic literacy and net worth. [15] These variables, in turn, are correlated with interest in news about the economy, business, and personal finance.

The news media should be even more aggressive in providing this kind of news to the public -- many Americans are interested in this kind of news and they need it to manage their personal financial affairs.

---

[15] The correlations (those of .159 or more are significantly different from zero) with economic literacy are: age (r = .266); education (r = .267); income (r = -.133), and gender (r = .197). The correlations with net worth (those of .159 or more are significant) are: age (r = .242); education (r = .283); income (r = .404); and gender (r = .099). The correlation between economic literacy and net worth is not significant (r = .124).

RECEIVED
JUL 1 7 2000

Treating the Y2K Bug

Knowledge Gap Factors that Shaped the Outcome of a Public Issue

Student Paper
Submitted to the Mass Communication and Society Division of
the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
for Presentation at the AEJMC Annual Convention
Phoenix, Arizona, 2000

Francesca R. Dillman Carpentier
Communication Graduate Studies
The University of Alabama
Box 870172
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
(205) 348-1235
e-mail: francesca.carpentier@ua.edu

RUNNING HEAD: Treating the Y2K Bug

Treating the Y2K Bug

Knowledge Gap Factors that Shaped the Outcome of a Public Issue

Francesca R. Dillman Carpentier

The University of Alabama

ABSTRACT

This study applies and expands upon the agenda setting findings of Hoff, et al. (1999) to the evaluation of the knowledge gap hypothesis. Implied in previous research, this study confirms the interactive nature of salience, interpersonal communication, and media exposure first proposed by Tichenor, et al. (1970), and dispels the myth that education is the strongest predictor of the knowledge gap. Further observations are presented and future directions for research are proposed.

Treating the Y2K Bug

Knowledge Gap Factors that Shaped the Outcome of a Public Issue

In 1970, Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien introduced to the mass communication field a framework for which to explain the strong correlation between education and the acquisition of knowledge obtained from the mass media. This framework, the knowledge gap, became the primary explanation as to why the media often failed in informing certain segments of the American population. It hypothesized that "over time, acquisition of knowledge of a heavily publicized topic will proceed at a faster rate among better educated persons...," and that "at a given point in time, there should be a higher correlation between acquisition of knowledge and education for topics highly publicized in the media than for topics less highly publicized" (p. 163). More importantly, Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien (1970) identified factors that would influence and shape the emergence of the knowledge gap. These factors were communication skills, existing knowledge, social discussion of given public issue, selective exposure and retention of information about that issue, and the nature of the media system that addressed the issue. It was assumed, first, that these factors were indicators of education level, and secondly, that education was an indicator of socioeconomic status. It was also assumed that the nature of the different media systems would affect the knowledge gap in that

> [P]rint media are geared to the interests and tastes of this higher-status segment and may taper off on reporting many topics when they begin to lose the novel characteristic of "news..." [Therefore, the print medium] lacks the constant repetition which facilitates learning and familiarity among lower-status persons. (p. 162)

Many researchers took notice of the knowledge gap hypothesis, and indeed, several studies emerged that examined one or more of the factors that Tichenor et al. (1970) had outlined. However, according to Gaziano (1983), who analyzed 58 such studies a decade after the hypothesis was introduced, the present work was not enough. Gaziano observed that there was still little empirical evidence that showed the existence of the knowledge gap under media publicity. Furthermore, there was a paucity of empirical research that examined the associations between education and knowledge gained from mass media coverage of a public issue. Several years later, knowledge gap research addressing mass media coverage began to surge.

For example, Griffin (1987) found in a panel study on energy issues that education did have an impact on public affairs energy knowledge. However, Griffin also found that the participants, regardless of educational status, used media coverage of the energy issue in similar ways. A third discovery identified issue salience as a positive correlate with energy issue relationships and media use.

Via interviews at a Boston shopping mall, Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1988) observed the influences of media systems and issue salience on information acquisition. Television media, for example, was shown to be more effective for respondents exhibiting a low interest in a public issue. Conversely, highly motivated or cognitively skilled respondents demonstrated no difference between type of medium and acquisition of information. Perhaps a more interesting discovery, though, is that most of the Boston mall respondents reported that they obtain their information about public issues both from media coverage and from personal discussion.

Dunwoody and Neuwirth (1988) also found evidence of the importance of interpersonal communication in their study of media coverage and the AIDS debate. Dunwoody and Neuwirth interviewed 438 undergraduate students in Wisconsin and concluded from the interviews that mass media exposure and interpersonal discussion were associated with risk reduction behaviors. In a similar study almost 10 years later, Lenart (1997) surveyed a panel of 238 participants about the 1992 Democratic presidential nomination and found evidence of the influence of interpersonal communication. Specifically, after controlling for political interest and media dependency, Lenart noted that interpersonal communication either complimented strong media effects or substituted for weaker or nonexistent media effects.

In sum, many studies provide support for the initial inclusion of social contact as a pertinent factor in predicting the knowledge gap (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970). However, many studies such as those of Griffin (1987) and Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1988) offer evidence that salience is another factor that may be used to predict the knowledge gap. Noticeably, the majority of these studies are qualitative in nature.

On the quantitative side, one study that offers compelling evidence for salience is that of Viswanath, et al. (1993). In this study, 1,002 surveys were completed 12 months apart to examine the knowledge gap within health communication. Findings indicated that, although there were educational differences within groups, the more motivated groups, determined by salience, perceived risk, and self-efficacy, surpassed the general population groups in knowledge gain.

Kwak (1999) found similar findings in a study of 421 respondents during the 1992 presidential campaign. In particular, Kwak discovered a three-way interaction between education, campaign interest, and newspaper news attention, as well as a gap-reducing effect of television viewing despite education levels. These and other findings clearly suggest that salience may override the overall effects of educational status on a given population.

The current evidence not only supports education and interpersonal communication as factors, but it also points to salience as a factor that may be used in the prediction of the knowledge gap under media publicity. Further evidence suggests that Tichenor et al. (1970) were correct in suggesting that the type of medium used will influence the emergence or existence of the knowledge gap (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1988; Kwak, 1999). In addition, the literature hints at an interaction between interpersonal communication, media exposure, and salience in affecting the acquisition of knowledge, the perceived risk, or the ultimate behavior resulting from that knowledge. If, indeed, an interaction between these three factors exists, a quantitative approach, rather than the qualitative approaches used to unearth many of these observations, would be most appropriate in determining the existence of the interaction as an overarching trend.

The present empirical study, exploratory and almost pilot-like in nature, seeks confirmation of the proposed interaction between the various identified factors, as well as confirmation that the type of medium used is an important factor on audience reactions to a highly publicized issue. Because the knowledge gap hypothesis is purposely applicable to "public affairs and science news having more or less general appeal" (Tichenor et al., 1970, p. 160), this study examines what is arguably the most extensively publicized public affairs and scientific issue of the millennium: the infamous Year 2000 computer bug.

The Y2K Bug

At the advent of the millennium, the Year 2000 computer bug, also known as the Y2K bug, took center stage in virtually every mass medium available. The "bug," which was nothing more than a widely-used programming shortcut in which years were identified by their last two digits, came to be represented as the potentially largest global crisis ever documented. The crisis? The shortcut, used for the purpose of saving valuable programming space, would, at midnight on January 1, 2000, enter the year 2000 as 00, leading computers all over the world to mistakenly believe that the year was now 1900. This small error in interpretation, it was presumed, would adversely affect time- and computer-based operations from bank accounts to air traffic controlling systems to missile defense systems to boot systems on a personal computer. It was also presumed that these adverse effects of the Y2K bug were unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Consequently, in 1999, this bug received a lot of publicity.

Not surprisingly, the bug and its publicity also began to attract researchers, especially in the realm of agenda setting. For example, Hoff, et al. (1999) performed a path analysis on the various influences of agenda-setting behavior and found that, among other observations, education, media believability, and interpersonal communication led to general behavioral intentions regarding Y2K bug protection. In addition, they found that media exposure and perceptions of community affiliation of the news media led to behavioral intentions such as ensuring the security of computer data files or personal computer programs in the face of Y2K. Again, even in the agenda setting research, factors of influence of the knowledge gap emerge, confirming the use of the Y2K issue as a prime public issue for evaluation.

Purpose

The present study expands upon the research conducted by Hoff, et al. (1999) to evaluate the Y2K issue in terms of the knowledge gap hypothesis. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions based on measurements taken from a random sample of local residents at two points in time. Not only does it address the factors already identified by Tichenor, et al. (1970), but it also examines issue salience, which the research suggests may be an additional factor in the shaping of the knowledge gap. Thus, three research questions arise from the literature.

RQ1: Does the type of media exposure make a difference in public perceptions and behaviors concerning the Y2K computer bug?

RQ2: Is there an interaction between time, salience, interpersonal communication, and media exposure in determining public perceptions or behaviors?

RQ3: Is formal education level the most powerful predictor of the knowledge gap despite influences from other factors such as salience, interpersonal communication, and media exposure?

METHOD

In a city[1] containing a large southeastern university, random samples of residents were interviewed via telephone during three-week periods in March 1999 and December 1999. Respondents were selected from a list of randomized telephone numbers, which was comprised using each of the available first three-digit seeds assigned to the county and generating the last four digits with a computer program. The same survey questions were asked of each respondent telephoned in March or December, and all responses were entered into an SPSS data file. Undergraduate and graduate students were trained to conduct the telephone interviews, resulting in 181 completed interviews.

---

[1] Approximately 25,000 telephone numbers were available for sample out of a total county population of 100,000.

Respondents

A total of 139 respondents agreed to complete the telephone interviews in March 1999. The sample consisted of 78 (60.5%) females and 51 (39.5%) males. Ten respondents chose not to respond to this question. Ages ranged from 18 to 83, although most respondents fell between the ages of 25 and 55. The majority of respondents (73.8%) categorized themselves as White. The large minority (20.0%) said they were Black, an additional six respondents (4.6%) said they were of some other ethnic background, and two respondents chose not to divulge this information. In addition, 30 respondents (23.4%) had attended or completed high school, 2 respondents (1.5%) had attended a business or technical school, 78 (60.9%) had attended or completed college, and 18 (14.1%) had attended or completed graduate school. Income was also evenly distributed, with 22 respondents (17.1%) making up to $20,000 per year, 49 (38.0%) making between $20,000 and $50,000 per year, and 46 (35.7%) making over $50,000 per year. Together, the demographic data coincides with census data taken from this city in 1990, which described the population as 72% Caucasian, 28% non-Caucasian, and having a median age of 30.6 years old.

The smaller sample of 42 respondents taken in December 1999 also resembles the population represented in the census data. Here, 40.4% were male and 59.6% were female. Age varied 16 years of age to 88, with the large majority of respondents falling between the ages of 21 and 52. Here, 66.7% identified themselves as White, 28.6% said they were Black, and 4.8% said they were of some other ethnic background. Similar to the first sample, 35.7% said they had attended or completed high school, 47.6% said they had attended or completed college, and 16.7% said that they had attended or completed graduate school. Income also resembled the first sample, in that 9.5% of the respondents reported yearly earnings of $20,000 or less, 42.6% reported yearly earnings of between $20,000 and $50,000, and 28.6% reported yearly earnings of more than $50,000. Furthermore, chi-square tests were run on each demographic to verify that the March 1999 and December 1999 samples did not significantly differ from each other. None of the chi-square values approached statistical significance.

Survey Instrument

The survey consisted of 20 questions, 19 of which were closed-ended. Four of the closed-ended questions sought demographic information, such as formal educational level, income, age, and ethnic background. The only open-ended question, the first question, was designed to be an ice-breaker, asking respondents to name the most important issue facing the country today.

Public Perception. The second and third questions asked respondents to provide their own identifications of the Y2K issue. Identifications ranged from light computer problems to serious economic problems, from predictions of no problems and solved problems to armageddon-esque problems. These identifications were later coded to signify problem-oriented or solution-oriented ("Y2K OK") perceptions of the Y2K bug.

Issue Salience. Following the identification questions, five questions ascertained salience levels (alpha = .91). Using a scale from 1 to 5, respondents rated how concerned they were about the Y2K bug, how relevant they thought the Y2K bug was to them, how interested they were in it, how important it was to them, and finally, how directly they felt it would affect them. A composite salience score was later calculated for each respondent based on factor loadings obtained from a Principle Component Analysis, resulting in a loading of .84 for concern and direct affect, .88 for relevance, and .87 for both interest and importance. Median splits created high and low salience groups for ANOVA use.

Preventive Behaviors. The next two closed-ended questions asked respondents how likely they were to engage in specific preventive behaviors in preparation for a possible Y2K crisis. A Principle Component Analysis with Varimax rotation yielded two factors. The first factor, which accounted for 42.91% of the variance (α = .80), represented general preventive behavior, operationalized as the intentions to set aside cash (loading = .85), stockpile food, water, and other supplies (loading = .74), change investing behaviors (loading = .68), and secure alternate sources of heat or electricity (loading = .50). The second factor, which accounted for 27.51% of the variance (α = .72), represented preventive computer behavior[2], specified as ensuring that personal computers were Y2K-compliant (loading = .82) and backing up data or documents (loading = .78).

Media Exposure. The next item asked respondents to estimate how many times a week they used the following media: local television news, network news, television news magazines, public television, public radio, cable news channels, cable religious channels, newspapers, magazines, commercial radio, newspapers on the Internet, and other sources on the Internet. In concert, these twelve measures created a media exposure indicator for each respondent. However, because it can be argued that different media provide different types of information, several of the media measures were combined to represent the most common types of media exposure. For example, local television news, network news, and television news magazines were averaged to create a commercial television exposure score. In addition, public television and national public radio measures were averaged into a public communication score. Newspapers, magazines, and Internet newspapers and other sources created a score representing print media, and cable news channels became the sole representation for cable media. Each of these categories were then subjected to median splits to create high and low exposure groups for analysis.

---

[2] Computer ownership was not solicited in the survey. However, respondents who did not own or use a computer were instructed to answer the computer behavior items as "not applicable."

Interpersonal Communication. One item on the survey asked respondents to estimate the number of times in the past week they had discussed the Y2K issue with others. This closed-ended item, an interpersonal communication measure, was adapted from the interpersonal communication measure used by Wanta (1997) regarding general political issues. Included were response choices from "not at all" (scored as 1) to "more than once a day" (scored as 5). High and low interpersonal communication groups were also manufactured via median splits for ANOVA use.

Unused Measures. Because the survey was also used in the agenda setting study of Hoff, et al. (1999), items specific to agenda setting research remained in the questionnaire but were not included in the present analysis. One such item was a single measure of general political interest (Wanta, 1997). Another item contained a news credibility index (Meyer, 1989), which was used in the previous research to ascertain public perceptions of media believability and media-community relations. Although these measures are superfluous to the present research, they were nonetheless included so as to ensure continuity between the Time 1 (March 1999) and Time 2 (December 1999) measurements.

RESULTS

The analysis of the survey data was conducted in three parts. The first part sought to determine whether different types of media exposure interacted with time to affect issue salience and interpersonal communication, two factors identified in the literature as affecting the knowledge gap. The second part of the analysis examined interactions and effects of the various identified factors on issue perception. The third portion estimated which factors contributed most to the prediction of general and computer preventive behaviors, including both the proposed factors of time, issue salience, interpersonal communication, and media exposure, and demographic factors such as formal education, income, and age.

Influences of Different Types of Media Exposure on Knowledge Gap Factors

Issue Salience. Issue salience was first regressed on time and total media exposure to see if media exposure, in general, contributed to the prediction of salience. The resulting model ($R^2 = .12$, $p < .01$) showed that time ($\beta = -.33$) clearly had a stronger pull on salience than did total media exposure ($\beta = .08$), and a follow-up ANOVA confirmed that an increase in time, indeed, corresponded with a decrease in salience ($F = 5.66$, $p < .05$). Total media exposure did not show significant main effects or interactions with time. However, different types of media exposure did elicit strong effects over time.

Commercial television exposure, for example, significantly interacted with time to affect salience levels ($F = 8.71$, $p < .01$). As shown in Table 1 below, high levels of commercial television exposure corresponded with high levels of salience at Time 1 and significantly lower salience levels at Time 2. Low levels of commercial television exposure, however, exhibited little change in salience over time.

Table 1

Mean Salience Scores for the Time X Commercial Television Exposure Interaction

Time of Measure	Low Exposure	High Exposure
Time 1	3.05^{ab}	3.15^{a}
Time 2	2.57^{ab}	2.44^{b}

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .10$.

Non-commercial television and radio also interacted with time to affect salience ($F = 6.58$, $p < .05$), as did cable television viewing ($F = 4.792$, $p < .05$). As illustrated in Tables 2 and 3, low exposure to both non-commercial media and cable news corresponded with a decrease in salience levels from Time 1 to Time 2. However, high exposure to public television and national public radio maintained a lower salience level over time, resulting in a convergence in salience measures at Time 2.

In contrast, high exposure to cable news maintained higher salience measures over time. This higher salience level matched that of the salience level corresponding with low cable exposure at Time 1. Over time, a diverging effect was observed between salience levels of heavy and lighter cable news viewers, with lighter viewers reporting significantly lower measures of salience at Time 2.

Table 2

Mean Salience Scores for the Time X Non-commercial Media Exposure Interaction

Time of Measure	Low Exposure	High Exposure
Time 1	3.45^{b}	2.76^{a}
Time 2	2.50^{a}	2.55^{a}

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Table 3

Mean Salience Scores for the Time X Cable News Exposure Interaction

Time of Measure	Low Exposure	High Exposure
Time 1	3.10^{a}	3.10^{a}
Time 2	1.94^{b}	3.25^{a}

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Interpersonal Communication. Although no effects were found for salience regarding print media exposure, an effect involving print was found for interpersonal communication. An ANOVA illuminated a three-way interaction between time, print media exposure, and cable exposure, in which respondents reporting high levels of cable viewing and high levels of print exposure enjoyed the highest amount of communication at Time 1 and the lowest amount of communication at Time 2 (see Table 4). No other effects regarding types of media exposure were found for interpersonal communication.

Table 4

Mean Interpersonal Communication Scores for the Time X Print Exposure X Cable News Exposure Interaction

Time of Measure	Print Exposure Levels	Low Cable Exposure	High Cable Exposure
Time 1	Low Print Exposure	2.30^{a}	2.26^{a}
	High Print Exposure	1.92^{a}	3.00^{b}
Time 2	Low Print Exposure	2.08^{a}	2.48^{ab}
	High Print Exposure	2.33^{ab}	1.83^{a}

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Influences of Knowledge Gap Factors on Public Perception

Several ANOVAs were executed to determine if one or more of the proposed knowledge gap factors interacted with time to affect how many respondents harbored solution-oriented perceptions of the Y2K issue, dubbed here as "Y2K OK." As expected, an ANOVA revealed that time, salience, interpersonal communication, and total media exposure interacted with each other to influence perception. The various lesser main and interaction effects leading to the four-way interaction are presented first.

Main Effects. Main effects influencing public perception were discovered for both time and salience. The main effect for time ($F = 5.82$, $p < .05$) showed that the percentage of respondents who felt that the Y2K issue would not be a problem at Time 1 (10%) was significantly lower than the percentage that shared the same sentiment at Time 2 (29%). In contrast, the main effect for salience ($F = 5.46$, $p < .05$) found that 11% of the highly salient respondents exhibited the "Y2K OK" mentality, whereas significantly more (29%) of the less motivated respondents had more faith in solutions.

Two-way Interactions. Not only did time and salience have main effects on public perception, but they interacted to affect perception as well ($F = 5.321$, $p < .05$). As illustrated in Table 5, levels of salience made little difference in perceptions at Time 1. However, at Time 2, lower levels of salience clearly outperformed higher levels in terms of solution-oriented responses.

In addition, a two-way interaction was discovered for time and total media exposure ($F = 5.27$, $p < .05$). Like the interaction between time and salience, the time X media exposure interaction showed little difference between perceptions at Time 1, yet a significant divergence according to media exposure levels at Time 2. Here, too, low exposure over time resulted in more respondents saying "Y2K OK" (see Table 6).

Table 5

Percentages of "Y2K OK" Respondents for the Time X Salience Interaction

Time of Measure	Low Salience	High Salience
Time 1	$.11^{a}$	$.10^{a}$
Time 2	$.47^{b}$	$.11^{a}$

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Table 6

Percentages of "Y2K OK" Respondents for the Time X Total Media Exposure Interaction

Time of Measure	Low Exposure	High Exposure
Time 1	$.04^{a}$	$.16^{ab}$
Time 2	$.57^{c}$	$.28^{b}$

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

An interaction involving salience and interpersonal communication was also found ($F = 5.89$, $p < .05$) to be significant. According to this effect (see Table 7), high amounts of interpersonal communication coupled with low levels of issue salience provided the highest levels of faith that Y2K would be OK. In contrast, higher salience levels, despite the amount of interpersonal discussion, led to lower numbers of "Y2K OK" responses, as did little interpersonal communication coupled with low salience. However, as is evident in the three-way interaction between time, salience, and interpersonal communication, this two-way trend pertains more to Time 2 than to Time 1.

Table 7

Percentages of "Y2K OK" Respondents for the Salience X Interpersonal Communication Interaction

Salience Levels	Low Communication	High Communication
Low Salience	$.22^a$	$.53^b$
High Salience	$.19^a$	$.09^a$

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Three-way Interactions. An examination of the three-way interaction between time, salience, and interpersonal communication ($F = 5.66$, $p < .05$) begins to exhume the shape of the knowledge gap measured at March 1999 and December 1999 (see Table 8). At Time 1, high levels of interpersonal discussion regarding the Y2K bug consistently resulted in higher percentages of "Y2K OK" perceptions, despite salience levels. Likewise, low levels of interpersonal communication maintained lower levels of positive perceptions. However, by Time 2, salience had interacted with interpersonal communication, resulting in highly salient respondents with high levels of interpersonal contact perceiving the Y2K issue as "not OK." Now low salience, despite levels of interpersonal communication, as well as high salience coupled with low interpersonal contact, exhibited the most faith.

A three-way interaction between total media exposure, salience, and interpersonal communication was also found to affect public perception ($F = 6.45$, $p < .05$). In short, low exposure in concert with low amounts of interpersonal discussion under low salience resulted in low numbers of respondents saying Y2K would be OK (Table 7). However, under high salience, low exposure and low discussion resulted in significantly higher numbers of respondents echoing the "Y2K OK" sentiment (see Table 9).

Table 8

Percentages of "Y2K OK" Respondents for the Time X Salience X Interpersonal Communication Interaction

Time of Measure	Salience Levels	Low Communication	High Communication
Time 1	Low Salience	$.04^{a}$	$.14^{ab}$
	High Salience	$.06^{a}$	$.15^{ab}$
Time 2	Low Salience	$.41^{c}$	$.75^{d}$
	High Salience	$.50^{bcd}$	$.00^{a}$

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Table 9

Percentages of "Y2K OK" Respondents for the Total Media Exposure X Salience X Interpersonal Communication Interaction

Salience Levels	Exposure Levels	Low Communication	High Communication
Low Salience	Low Exposure	$.11^{a}$	$.50^{b}$
	High Exposure	$.34^{b}$	$.39^{b}$
High Salience	Low Exposure	$.53^{b}$	$.05^{a}$
	High Exposure	$.03^{a}$	$.10^{a}$

Note. Means having different superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

Four-way Interaction. The largest, and most theoretically significant, effect was the interaction between time, salience, interpersonal communication, and total media exposure ($F = 8.14$, $p < .01$). The four-way ANOVA yielded both significant effects for groups of respondents within each time measure and effects for groups across time (see Table 10). At Time 1, for example, fewer of the respondents reporting low salience levels, low levels of media exposure, and little interpersonal discussion of the Y2K issue held the "Y2K OK" opinion in comparison with those reporting high media exposure and ample interpersonal contact, regardless of salience levels. Within Time 2, respondents measuring low in salience, yet high in either media exposure or interpersonal communication, echoed "Y2K OK" moreso than respondents categorized by high salience coupled with high exposure and/or communication, as well as those low in salience, exposure, and communication.

Across time, no significant differences were found between perceptions of respondents reporting either low salience with low exposure and communication or high salience with high exposure and/or communication. However, the respondent group measuring low in salience and exposure, yet high in interpersonal communication, boasted a greater percentage of solution-oriented perceptions at Time 2 than did any group in Time 1. In addition, more respondents measuring low in salience, high in exposure, and low in communication were confident in Y2K solutions than were any other group in Time 1, with the exception of those low in salience but high in both exposure and communication. A third Time 2 group that outperformed most other Time 1 groups was that which encompassed respondents high in salience but low in both exposure and interpersonal contact. The exception to this example was the group consisting of those measuring low in salience and exposure, but high in interpersonal discussion. The final Time 2 group to surpass many of the Time 1 groups in terms of larger percentages of "Y2K OK" perceivers was that of respondents low in salience and high in both media exposure and interpersonal communication. This group's significant differences between other groups, as well as the other significant differences, are better illustrated in the table below.

Table 10

Percentages of "Y2K OK" Respondents for the Time X Total Media Exposure X Salience X Interpersonal Communication Interaction

Salience Levels	Exposure Levels	Communication Levels	Time 1	Time 2
Low Salience	Low Exposure	Low Communication	$.00^{a\ A}$	$.22^{c\ A}$
		High Communication	$.00^{ab\ ABE}$	$1.00^{d\ D}$
	High Exposure	Low Communication	$.08^{ab\ AB}$	$.60^{d\ CD}$
		High Communication	$.29^{b\ AC}$	$.50^{cd\ BC}$
High Salience	Low Exposure	Low Communication	$.06^{ab\ A}$	$1.00^{cd\ E}$
		High Communication	$.10^{ab\ AB}$	$.00^{c\ A}$
	High Exposure	Low Communication	$.06^{ab\ A}$	$.00^{c\ A}$
		High Communication	$.20^{b\ AB}$	$.00^{c\ A}$

Note. Means having different lower-case superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$ within their respective time groups. Means having different upper-case superscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$ across time groups. Cells having too few members were accounted for and controlled by the statistical methods used to calculate significance.

Predictions of Preventive Behaviors using Knowledge Gap Factors

The final analyses sought to determine which factors contributed most to the prediction of computer-oriented and general behavioral intentions aimed at preparing for possible complications stemming from the Y2K bug. Factors included in the analysis were time, salience, interpersonal communication, and media exposure, as well as the more traditional education and income factors. Age was also included in the analysis under the assumption that the Y2K issue, technological in nature, may have had different impacts for different age groups. Models for the different behaviors are presented below.

Computer Preventive Behavior. A backwards regression analysis was used to see if time, salience, interpersonal communication, media exposure, education, income, and age contributed to the prediction of computer-oriented behavior such as backing up data or ensuring that personal computers were Y2K-compliant. The resulting significant model ($R^2 = .12$, $p < .05$) kept only income and media exposure as factors, eliminating all other factors from the analysis. Income ($\beta = -.32$) had the strongest pull on computer-oriented intentions, although, surprisingly, the direction of this pull was negative. However, a closer inspection of the interviews revealed that respondents reporting higher levels of income also reported working in offices that had already prepared for Y2K compliance and/or had a back-up system in operation, thus reducing the need to engage in further preventive behaviors.

The second factor, media exposure ($\beta = .12$), had a weaker pull on computer-oriented intentions. Removing media exposure from the analysis, however, resulted in a lower effect size, thereby supporting its inclusion in the model. Further support that increased media exposure results in increased measures of intention can be found in previous ANOVA analyses, in which high levels of media exposure corresponded with lower "Y2K OK" percentages (see Table 6).

General Preventive Behavior. A backwards regression analysis was again employed to see which knowledge gap factors contributed most to the prediction of general preventive behavior, defined here as the inclination to stockpile essentials, secure alternate sources of energy, and ensure financial safety. Interestingly, the first model, which included all proposed factors, yielded the most promising results ($R^2 = .38$, $p < .01$). According to the model, salience ($\beta = .50$) had the strongest pull on general preventive behavioral intentions, signifying that as salience levels increased, intentions also increased. This effect coincides with that of the previous ANOVA, which found that a decrease in salience to correspond with increasing "Y2K OK" responses (see Table 5). Education ($\beta = -.39$) had the second strongest pull, with higher levels of education resulting in decreased intentions. Age ($\beta = .21$) followed in strength of influence, implying that older populations, presumably those with little interest in computers or technological businesses, saw little reason to increase preparedness levels. Time ($\beta = .19$), dummy-coded for regression use, had the next largest effect, the direction of which agrees with the various ANOVA analyses, assuming that better preparedness yields brighter outlooks. Income ($\beta = -.14$), as with computer-oriented intentions, also exhibited a negative pull on general preventive behavioral intentions. Again, upon closer examination of survey responses, it appears that respondents reporting higher levels of income felt more comfortable in both their current levels of preparedness and that of their business services. Total media exposure ($\beta = .11$) followed income as the next strongest influence, which, again, can be defended referencing previous analyses (see Table 6). Finally, interpersonal communication ($\beta = .00$) had little pull on intentions, although removal of this factor resulted in a smaller effect size for the regression model. Its lack of presence in the linear regression model, however, may be due to its interactive nature with other factors affecting the knowledge gap.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to determine three things. First, it examined whether exposure to different types of media made a difference in the outcome of the Y2K bug. Second, it asked whether an interaction affecting the outcome existed between time, issue salience, amounts of interpersonal communication, and amounts of total media exposure. Third, the study examined whether education still reigned as the most powerful predictor of the knowledge gap despite influences from other factors. In sum, these questions were answered.

In answer to the first question, the first prong of the analysis shows that different types of media exposure do interact with time to affect the supported factors of salience and interpersonal communication, which, in turn, would affect final outcomes such as public perception and behavioral intentions. For salience, only electronic media were shown to significantly interact with time, but in different ways. Commercial television viewing, for example, resulted in lower salience levels for heavy viewers only. However, lighter non-commercial media consumption converged to meet heavier consumers' lower salience levels, and lighter cable viewing dropped from heavier viewing to result in lower salience levels over time. Interpersonal communication levels, on the other hand, were affected by an interaction between print consumption, cable news consumption, and time, with high print partnered with high cable consumption making the significant drop over time. Although this analysis cannot purport to answer the "why" regarding the directions of these interactions, it is clear that the answer to this first research question is "yes," different types of media yield different effects on the outcome of the knowledge gap. The logical next step for this portion of the analysis would be to do an extensive content analysis of the messages disseminated by each of the examined types of exposure between March 1999 and December 1999. This next step would undoubtedly elucidate the "why" of these interactions.

The second research question asked whether an interaction existed between time, salience, interpersonal communication, and total media exposure. This was confirmed via the second prong of the analysis. A four-way interaction was, indeed, found between these factors to affect public perception, as were other lesser interactions and main effects. The four-way interaction, however, told the more accurate story, in that its findings indicate that the effects of stronger indicators such as salience or time can be overpowered by a change in level of a single factor such as media exposure or interpersonal discussion. This observation questions the appropriateness of analyzing knowledge gap phenomena using the more traditional empirical approaches that rely on linear statistical modeling. Education and other socioeconomic factors have been used successfully in prediction-oriented analyses. However, the inclusion of interactive factors such as salience, interpersonal discussion, and media exposure in a prediction-oriented analysis might result in a diluted picture of the influences affecting the gap. Herein lie the limitations of the third prong of the analysis.

The third prong addresses the question as to whether education remains the most powerful predictor of the knowledge gap despite the inclusion of other factors such as salience, interpersonal communication, and media exposure. As analyzed, computer-oriented preventive behavior identified its constraints when it claimed only income and media exposure as valid predictors of intentions. Clearly, other factors not addressed in this study affected whether respondents reported that they would engage in these types of behaviors, for example, where they worked, whether they owned a personal computer, or whether their personal computer was already Y2K-compliant. General preventive behavioral intentions, however, pertained to the greater majority of respondents, as evident from the more substantial regression output. Here, salience surpassed education as the strongest predictor of general Y2K behaviors. Education was second in strength, however, giving credence to the number of studies in the literature that identified education as powerful predictor of the knowledge gap. As expected, media exposure and interpersonal communication exhibited the weakest predictive power according to the linear model. However, again, this result may be due to the interactive nature of these factors, namely that they would not behave as truly independent predictors as is required in a regression analysis. Still, this linear model did successfully demonstrate that education is not necessarily the strongest predictor in a knowledge gap analysis.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is unfortunate that the Y2K phenomenon cannot be revisited and re-analyzed using a larger sample and more times of measure. However, the results of this study hold promising avenues for future research. First, a thorough content analysis of messages disseminated from commercial television, non-commercial television, cable news, and print channels would be very illuminating in identifying the unique effects that different media have in influencing public opinion. Second, interpersonal communication, salience, and media consumption need to be more explicitly addressed under the knowledge gap umbrella. In this step, clarifications are needed regarding nature of these interactions, as well as clarifications regarding the very questions that should be asked. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches may be most appropriate in undertaking this line of research. A third, and more ambitious step, would be to ascertain which methods of research are clearly the most appropriate in studying knowledge gap phenomena. As evident in the literature, there are legitimate homes for both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. However, certain, perhaps more sophisticated methodologies within these two camps may be more suitable, and in the end, more profitable in the ultimate understanding of this social phenomenon.

REFERENCES

Dunwoody, S., & Neuwirth, K. (1988, July). The impact of information on AIDS risk judgements and behavioral change among young adults. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Portland, OR.

Gaziano, C. (1983). The knowledge gap: An analytical review of media effects. Communication Research, 10(4), 447-486.

Griffin, R. J. (1987, September). Energy, education, and media use: A panel study of the knowledge gap. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, San Antonio, TX.

Hoff, E. E, Ralstin, L. A., Dillman (Carpentier), F., & Bryant, A. (1999, August). Agenda setting and the Y2K bug: Paths of influence on behaviors and issue salience. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, New Orleans, LA.

Kwak, N. (1999). Revisiting the knowledge gap hypothesis: Education, motivation, and media use. Communication Research, 26(4), 385-413.

Lenart, S. (1997). Naming names in a midwestern town: The salience of Democratic presidential hopefuls in early 1992. Political Behavior, 19(4), 365-382.

Meyer, P. (1989). Defining and measuring credibility of newspapers: Developing an index. Journalism Quarterly, 66, 567-574, 588.

Neuman, W. R., Just, M., & Crigler, A. (1988, September). Knowledge, opinion, and the news: The calculus of political learning. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC.

Tichenor, P. J., Donohue, G. A., & Olien, C. N. (1970). Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge. Public Opinion Quarterly, 34, 159-170.

Viswanath, K., Kahn, E., Finnegan, J. R., Jr., Hertog, J., & Potter, J. D. (1993). Motivation and the knowledge gap: Effects of a campaign to reduce diet-related cancer risk. Communication Research, 20(4), 546-563.

Wanta, W. (1989). The public and national agenda: How people learn about important issues. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Running Head: How Did Three U.S.
(August,2000-AEJMC Mass com & society)

A Framing Analysis:

How Did Three U.S. News Magazines Frame about Mergers or Acquisitions?

Sang Hee Kweon

College of Mass Communication and Media Art

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Mailing address:
1960-1 Evergreen Terrace
Carbondale, IL 62901
E-mail:sang@siu.edu

Paper presented at the AEJMC Mass Communication and Society Division
At Phoenix, AZ, August 9-12, 2000

Abstract

This paper explores how news media frame mergers or acquisitions. The main research question is how news magazines deal with mergers in the 1990s unstable social phenomenon. The study examined coverage of the mergers based on the types of mergers, government policy, and news focus of the three U.S. news magazines. This study found that all three magazines covered mergers or acquisitions favorably, particularly media mergers, and mergers news coverage was 35.3%(183) episodic and 64.5 % (335) thematic. Fortune, a business-focused magazine, covered non-media mergers more favorably, whereas Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report covered media mergers more favorably than non-media mergers. This study found that the Telecommunication Act of 1996 affected media coverage of both the frequency and tone for media and non-media mergers.

A Framing Analysis:

How Did Three U.S. News Magazines Frame about Mergers or Acquisitions?

Media researchers have long recognized that journalists play a pivotal role in the social construction of reality. Lippmann (1922) stated that the news media construct a picture of reality for the audience both in agenda setting and priming. "[T]he picture inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of their needs, purposes, and relationship, are their public opinion (1922: p.29)."

Carey also noted that "the press collaborates in the quest for meaning while innocently reporting the news" (1986: p.193). Journalists are the sense-makers, not only informing the public but also providing a context to help people weave isolated events into their existing concept of reality.

Yet, as Carey observed, that context depends less upon the nature of reality than journalistic traditions. "[T]he stories written by journalists manifest the reality-making practices of the craft rather than some objective world" (p.159).

When news media confront a new trend or development in society, they perform a service by manufacturing a fixed, representation, and stable world. When confronted with a new trend, technology, or development, the news media go about this manufacturing reality called "reality making." They proceeded in this "reality-making" based on various organizational constraints.

Mergers in 1990s: More and more, business and media organizations have become subsidiaries of conglomerate ownership. Thus, mergers are the 1990s' new business and economic trend under the new logic of capitalism (Chan-Olmsted, 1998).

The mergers of ownership in media and general business have been growing and are expected to continue. Therefore, the news media devoted considerable space and time to the coverage of merger news. A brief reading of the sampled merger news for the last six years has borne sufficient support of this phenomenon, but questions remain whether news media criticize or support the mergers or acquisition phenomenon. The relationship between news media's coverage and social phenomenon is a serious topic in mass communication studies.

Asking Questions: How did U.S. news media cover mergers or acquisitions as a significant social phenomenon? How did the news media cover the mergers and acquisitions? Using this perspective, this paper will focus on the news media coverage of mergers. A literature review will show that the media mergers in the 1990s are a critical turning point to the media conglomerate ownership as following new economic trends.

The question arises whether Journalists' coverage and attitudes are positive or negative toward mergers as social phenomena. And then, the merger coverage between media and non-media mergers will be compared as either equal-voice or biased. When government policy is changed, is the news media voice toward mergers positive or negative? Finally, this study compares the coverage of the three newsmagazines: Fortune, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report. Therefore this study assumes the tone and frequencies will depend on three factors: merger types, social or government policy, and the organization's focused area and topic.

The second-level question is how news magazines covered the dimensions of news for mergers from various news formats and news orientations. More specifically, this study will compare differences between issue- and event-related coverage for mergers, and how many illustrations the news has. To figure out the frame level, this paper uses several broad concepts as variables. This paper is coded two ways: the use of positive and negative terms and the emphasis "issue oriented" which is related to the thematic presentation or "event oriented," which is related episodically. Iyenger (1991) found two types of framing, "episodic and thematic." According to his research, television news provides one or the other of these types of frames of reference when reporting political issues. The episodic news frame is taken from a case study or event-oriented report (accident or crime), whereas the thematic frame places public issues in some more general or abstract context (social welfare or government policy). Finally, this paper will find out where the news' geographical locations are. The three U.S. new magazines focus global mergers or U.S. and how the news location affects the tone and direction.

Significance of the Study:

This study explores the existence of the merger as a social phenomenon in the media's handling of mergers or acquisitions, specifically in the coverage of the mergers or acquisitions of news stories by three major U.S. newsmagazines.

People become aware of merger reality based on media reconstruction of this reality, that it is inter-related with government policy and news media's own perspective for the event, and their own rules. The importance of this study is to find out how news media cover the various merger phenomena. When merger phenomena began in the early 1970s, news media's coverage was unnoticeable. That changed rather abruptly with the appearance of media conglomerates in the 1980s, when the merger or acquisition became the subject of articles in The Economist, Wall Street Journal, and perhaps most notably in the business section of certain elite newspapers (Bagdikian, 1992). After the 1990s, the merger news became front-page news.

Media systems in the 1990s in the United States created new media industries, called conglomerate ownership or ownership convergence, from previously distinctive media forms such as newspaper, television, and radio (Croteau, 1997). Most media trends are "convergence" caused by media mergers and new digital technologies. These two trends create three media convergences: industry convergence (horizontal integration or vertical integration), media content convergence (various genre combination) and media consumer convergence that blurs national boundaries and generation gaps (Pavlik, 1998, p.134).[1] The first convergence or media conglomerate ownership creates new types of media content and media consumer convergence because it creates new commodities.

The shift from traditional media to the new style is called a paradigm shift.[2] Convergence through mergers and acquisitions seems a main trend in the American media industry in the 1990s. The changes in ownership and news or media contents are the main causes of the paradigm shift from highly social economic changes (Chan-Olmsted, 1998). When media structure has been changed, the media content also changes. The corporation ownership has changed the product's content.

This merger phenomenon also occurs in non-media areas such as banking, medicine, airline, car, and computer industry. Not only non-media but also media sides keep continue to merger together. Various media mergers and acquisitions occur under business strategies, but average people understand or realize the merger or acquisition from news media or companies' PR activities. Thus, actual merger and news coverage might be different or biased.

---

[1] Furthermore, traditionally distinctive contents including data, text, voice, and picture are all, put together into one media. Convergence is the coming together of all forms of mediated communications in an electronic, digital form driven by computers and enabled by network technology. Convergence presents profound challenges for the existing media order.

[2] Paradigm is a group style, a set of elements, which can, according to rules, substitute for one another. The style remains a unified system because the paradigm offers bounded alternatives.

As the result, it is important to examine how news media cover these kinds of mergers or acquisitions news. This study examines coverage of mergers and acquisitions news by U.S. newsmagazines, discovering evidence of a favorable-nonfavorable-neutral tone in reporting of the mergers or acquisitions phenomenon comparing between media – and non-media, before and after the Telecommunication Act of 1996, and types of magazines.

Literature Review

Theoretical Background: Framing theory is the primary theoretical framework in this study, but several theories will be introduced. Framing analysis has been used in media content analysis and fits well in the merger news study. As already mentioned, this research incorporates a comparative review of media mergers and non-media mergers. The government policy is regarded as a significant social political factor, and news focused types are organizationally constrained. According to Gamson (1989), the news frame is the central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue. The government policy, specific topics, and media type may lead to different frame in news reporting. Thus, this study focused on how news media employ different frames for reporting merger or acquisition events based on their media-self reflective, types of news focused magazines, and policy.

Reality-making especially relies on media organizations' interests and their perspectives. News media may use frame devices to create reality-making. Media frames are typically unobtrusive and encompass principles of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and presentation routinely used by journalists to organize discourse (Gitlin 1980). News media can frame social phenomenon such as mergers, crime, poverty, and political issues in several ways: "by ignoring it, blurring the news in the back section, repeating or stressing." (David et. al 1981). Tankard, et. al. (1991) states that news media frame social issues based on "central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration." So, frame analysis connects related to interpretation of an issue. Thus, a frame connects ideas within a news story in a way that suggest a particular interpretation of an issue.

One important function of framing is to define a problem or suggestion. What aspects of the issue are most important, and how are they presented? Another function of framing is the assignment of responsibility for social problems (Iyenger, 1990). A reporter describes the cause of problems. The notion of responsibility involves both cause and treatment (Leweke, 1996). This is, who or what caused the social problem? And who should solve the problem? This means headline or text describe which one is a social problem and how should the problem be solved.

Thus, one of the media's most powerful effects is setting the agenda or issue by either positive emphasis or negative suppressions. Using this tool, media can shape a reality with either positive or negative framing. Media scholars can read media organizations' invisible constraints through content analysis. Content analysis can reveal the news media's frame set, which can show us the coverage level and ideological location of news content.

Framing Theory: According to frame theory, frame occurs in four different locations: communicator, text, audience, and culture or society itself. Frames have at least four locations in the communication process. First, communicators consciously or unconsciously produce frames. Media frames everyday reality through efficiently packaging news. Second, texts contain frames, "which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Third, receivers are guided in their interpretation of communicators' frames by their own frames (related to priming theory). This frame happens in the audience's side. The audience does selective mental information processing. Fourth, society's culture at large "is the stock of commonly invoked frames" (p. 53). The whole society frames news a certain way. News stories could not be beyond the society's ideological boundary. This mechanism includes news text being manipulated within a permitted environment. Some scholars such as Kronsnick & Kinder (1990), and Miller (1997) provide a media framing theory to explain more effectively the work of the news media in a social context. For this reason, we can read the news discourse with a social or historical media effect, and a study can apply or predict related social phenomenon such as the Telecommunication Act of 1996.[3] The Telecommunication Act of 1996 was signed Feb 8, 1996, by President Clinton.

---

[3] Like for nearly a century Washington and Hollywood had been embroiled in love-hate relationship that has shaped the industry (Harris, 1995). The government policy and media organization constrains affected shaping news tone and journalist's reporting the phenomenon.

The Act promised to increase competition through widespread deregulation of the industry, but instead it created a free-fall of mega-mergers, a concentration of media power unprecedented in modern capitalism that may now threaten the basic prerequisite of democratic action: the access to truth (McChesney, 1996). Thus, the Act provides for a pro-competitive, deregulatory national policy framework designed to accelerate rapidly private sector deployment of advanced telecommunications and information technologies and services to all Americans by opening all telecommunications markets to competition, and for other purposes (McChesney, 1996).

The goal of this new law was to let anyone enter any communications business -- to let any communications business compete in any market against any other (Congress maps a telecom future, 1996). The Act has the potential to change the way we work, live and learn. It will affect telephone service -- local and long distance, cable programming and other video services, broadcast services and services provided to schools. The Federal Communications Commission has a tremendous role to play in creating fair rules for this new era of competition. (Rosston at. Al, 1997).

Framing theory provides an answer for the question of how news texts are framed by media style, and among business focus, general news focus, and media focus. Furthermore, how does government policy affects news coverage? When news media focus on their own story, how do they cover the news? What kind of news selection value do they have in news media? An analysis of news frames is a useful theoretical model that provides news text's various dimensions. Through content analysis, one could get the answer to the news framing style, format, timing, and nature for mergers, or acquisitions news for both media and non-media.

Not only are news media affected by the existing socio-economic and government policy, but they also frame their own organizational constraints. Media content reflects both social-cultural phenomenon and organizations' structural constraint.

Examples of Different Framing Setting: Traditionally journalists do have certain levels of autonomy, but when news media cover their stories and relate their experiences, the coverage tone and amount would be affected based on their constraints. One constraint is external, including commercial or economical factors, which are competition for audience and maximization of profit; the other constraint is internal including newsroom policies, which are corporate norms and values within an organization (Croteau, 1995).

Fico and Soffin (1995) found that in terms of the fairness and balance with which news organizations treat conflicting points of view, more than 50% of the stories had at least four of the six story qualities dominated by one side. This finding implies that news organizations can frame a news story, as they desire.

In a 1993 study, Kenney and Simpson examined all issues of the Washington Post and Washington Times over a four-month period to determine whether those papers were biased in their coverage of presidential candidates. This study conducted a content analysis of stories and photographs about 30 events in the 1988 presidential campaign. It found that the Washington Post's coverage was balanced and neutral, but the Washington Times' coverage favored the Republicans. More than one-third of the Times headlines and stories were biased in favor of Republicans. These findings are important because they support Shoemaker and Reese's political ideology theory of news content, which states that ownership and financing determine news content.

More recently, Lee and Hwang (1997) found that conglomerate ownership could force a leading news magazine to show favoritism toward the products of its parent corporation. The study shows Time had a favorable bias in Time Warner's products and subsidiaries. Time's content for Time Warner-related issues was more favorable than Newsweek's coverage. Therefore, ownership most likely has an impact on media content including tone and direction.

Mergers as a Framing Setting in Postmodern -industry

When media ownership has changed to a media conglomerate, media mergers or acquisitions have a different framesetting. In American democratic history, diverse opinions and free speech are key factors for holding public forums. However, through the conglomerate ownership, the nation's press has become largely one voice. Bagdikian (1992) has provided the best-known examination of the concentration of media ownership. The conglomerate ownership leads to homogeneous media products that serve the interests of the increasingly small number of owners. This is called homogenization hypothesis (Croteau, 1995). This organizational presentation of news is a recent phenomenon. Organizational framing and ideology turn to the main power to shape the news story and to frame public agenda for social issues and their economic issues.

As Hall (1982) notes, ideology is most effective when it becomes "natural, universal, and continous with reality itself" (1982, p. 65). Therefore, attempts to measure ideological influence on content have been challenging and persistently questionable. Most of the studies of ideological influence in media have been theoretical and largely originate from a Neo-Marxist perspective that borrows much from the Frankfurt School of social and cultural theory.

In the case of examining ideological influences on "convergence," mergers or acquisitions, corporate ideology of both media and non-media were exacting a powerful and noticeable influence on the stories presented. However, merely to expose any apparent ideological seams and boundaries where the dominant representation of reality runs up against other, counter-hegemonic versions of the same reality. This itself is a statement about the nature of today's mainstream media (Murdock, 1977).

Therefore, the most useful theoretical model for explaining the organization and late capital ideology is the framing theory. As Entman (1993) put it, to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993, p.52).

Key to the concept of framing are the twin elements of selection and salience. News media select the frame (often called the angle, theme, perspective, or slant) for the text, and then attributes of the subject within that frame become more salient than objects outside the frame (Tuchman, 1973). For example, Entman observed that the "cold war frame" dominated coverage of foreign policy until the decline of the Soviet Union. This frame, he contended, precluded perceptions of foreign affairs that did not in some way involve the encroachment of Communism and U.S. attempts to contain it (1993, p. 52). It was, simply put, the dominant meaning that news workers selected to make salient in stories of that type, and thus became the dominant perceived reality in the audience.

The ideological phenomenon has been shifted from cold war to "late capitalism," which created new social terms such as mergers. Society changed from market ideology to multinational ideology. Mandel (1987) characterizes historical periods by the interrelationship of the various economies and organizations that make up the conglomerate ownership. So that the conglomerate ownership's changing mode of production and structure are caused by the new order of late capitalism. As a result, conglomerate ownership change enforced market oriented news commodity, and news became regarded as an economic sector.

In the late capitalism ideology of the 1990s, how did news media frame mergers and acquisitions in the different context of media merger story, the social government policy, and news magazine types? If news media framed stories positively for the media merger, the audience would prime their memories to the agreement or positive way. That means, there was a dominant meaning news editors chose to make salient and this likely became the dominant way of perceiving the merger or their economic activity. As a result, the audience follows dominant news media's ways as well as all consumption or cultural tendency followed late capitalism logic. To the extent that this frame is dominant across media, we can argue that the autonomy of the audience to adopt perceptions outside this preferred reading is limited.

Thus, people are encouraged to think about the media mergers' wants. Agenda setting studies have explained how media influence people on "what to think about" (McCombs, 1972). Therefore, the media's coverage of an issue becomes an important public issue as well as priming of the audiences (Miller, 1997). Priming theory proposes that mass media activate or trigger the audience to think of a related issue. According to priming theory, the more attention media pay to particular topics, the more the public is primed to think of those topics (Krosnick, 1990). By identifying the dominant frames and, more importantly, the unused or oppositional frames, in coverage of the reality, we can also determine the extent to which journalists succeeded or failed in attempts at objectivity and fairness.

Though the information delivered is very often factual, and still fairly unbiased, framing research would question how complete a picture of reality is being conveyed. To the extent that certain frames have recurrent dominance within a media outlet and across media outlets, one must question the true objectivity and completeness of the reporting, particularly when various media internal-external interests are potentially at work. How do news media cover their merger activity and non-media merger activity? How do U.S. news media cover mergers or acquisitions with various frame settings? How did the news media cover a merger event? Using this perspective, this paper will focus on the news magazines' merger coverage style, frequencies, tone, and location.

Research Questions

The overall research question is: Did news organizations cover media mergers differently than non-media mergers? Specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine whether news media show a bias in covering media mergers. Additional questions are whether government policy and media types affect coverage of mergers.

Independent Variables: There are three types of comparisons in this paper: The first is media-related and non-media-related mergers or acquisitions news; the second is content before and after the Telecommunication Act of 1996; and the third is content between media type--business news media and general news media.

The first independent variable is a type of merger with two levels: media and non-media. A third type of merger, a combination media with non-media, will not be studied in this paper. More and more, media and non-media organizations have become subsidiaries of conglomerates. Late capitalism is the process by which big firms attempt to invest in the both media and non-media as well as formerly regarded non-industry such as sports, art, and film. Usually, conglomerates in the news industry target the profit available in international markets. There are three main methods by which the conglomerates have invested capital in the media: expansion, horizontal expansion, and vertical expansion (USDC 1993).

The second independent variable is government policy, which is represented by the Telecommunication Act of 1996. Does this policy affect newsmagazines' mergers or acquisitions news coverage? This paper will compare the frequency of the news before and after the Telecommunication Act of 1996 and the difference between favorable and non-favorable frequencies.

The third independent variable concerns the type of news media: a general business focused magazine(Fortune: conglomerate ownership), and a general newsmagazine: (Newsweek and U.S. News World Report: corporate ownership). More clearly, Fortune is general business newsmagazine, whereas Newsweek and U.S. World & Report are general news-focused magazines.

Dependent Variables: The dependent variables are amount of merger news and bias in tone of coverage.

Amount: The amount of the news coverage is measured two ways: news frequency and news length. News frequencies are counted by total story number, and news length is defined as the "**total news paragraphs.**" The amount will be compared between media merger and non-media merger, before and after the Telecommunication

Act of 1996, and between news media types. Therefore, the main hypothesis is the "tone" of coverage between media and non-media merger. The second amount coverage comparison is before and after the Telecommunication Act of 1996, and the types of news magazines This paper will examine the frequency as well as tone of the six-year period's mergers or acquisitions news coverage from 1993 to 1998.

Tone : In the next level, this paper will compare the bias of coverage "tone." Thus, the independent variable is media and non-media mergers and the dependent variable is tone or orientation--- "favorable, neutral, and unfavorable." The article's tone can be discovered by reading the abstract and whole news articles of the merger news stories. In order to appropriately code the tone of the news, a coder must read the abstract thoroughly to understand the essence of the item. The story should be understood as the context unit. The definitions used for the coding of tone are defined in the coding procedure section.

RQ1: The first comparison of the tone is between media and non-media merger news content is bias based on media and non-media merger.

RQ2: Another comparison with the tone is news bias before and after of the Telecommunication Act of 1996.

RQ3: Yet another tone comparison is based on the type of newsmagazine. The different focus types of magazines are compared the coverage and tone toward both "merger."

Orientations: This paper compares orientation of stories, either issue- or event-oriented coverage. RQ4: The research question is that media mergers are covered by issue-oriented, while non-media mergers are covered by event-oriented.

Research Hypothesis:

In order to investigate trends in news coverage of mergers and acquisitions, this study examines five separate hypotheses. The first is related to the existence of an initially polarized view of media and non-media coverage and compares the tone of each. The second compares the amount and tone of the coverage before and after the Telecommunication Act of 1996. The third compares the tone of different news media types, such as business-focused magazine and general news-focused magazine. The other compares between issue-oriented and event-oriented news by media and non-media mergers. Finally, this study attempts to find out the merger news' geographical locations.

H1: The percentage of news about media mergers will be greater than the percentage of news about non-media mergers in the three news magazines.
H1-a: The mean number of paragraphs of favorable news about media mergers will be higher than the mean scores of favorable news about non-media mergers.

H2: The percentage of news about media mergers will be greater after the Telecommunication Act of 1996 than before.
H2-a: The percentage of favorable news coverage of media mergers will be significantly greater after the Telecommunication Act of 1996 than before.

H3: The business-focused news magazine (Fortune) will have a higher percentage of non-media merger news coverage than media merger, whereas the general news-focused magazines (Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report) will have a higher percentage of media merger news than non-media merger.
H3-a: The business-focused news magazine will cover non-media merging news more favorably than media mergers news, whereas general news-focused news media will cover more media merger news more favorably for than non-media mergers

H4: News magazines will present "issue related coverage for media mergers, but" event related coverage" for non-media mergers.
H4-a: "News formats" are event-related coverage, while "feature formats" are issue-related coverage

H5. All three news magazines will cover U.S. merger news more frequently than non-U.S. merger news.
H5-a: U.S. merger news has more favorable coverage than non-U.S. merger news.

Methodology

Method: To provide data for hypothesis testing, a content analysis of merger news stories was conducted. Content analysis is the application of scientific method to documentary evidence (Berelson, 1952). Weber suggested that "content analysis is a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferenced from text" (1985, p.9). Media content can reflect the process of news making. Thus a researcher can define the factors of affections. To do scientific method, content analysis requires objectivity, system, and generality (Holsti, 1969).

Population: This study's population is merger or acquisition news in the U.S. news magazines. The magazines were sampled from several prominent U.S. news magazines with circulation and influence.

Sample

The sample includes Fortune, Newsweek, and U.S. News World & Report because they are considered mainstream and have large circulations. Several factors are considered in these sample choices, including the size of the newsmagazine (in terms of circulation) and its national influence. Also, these newsmagazines are widely available on newsstands and national markets. The sample includes one business focus magazine, and two general news-focus magazines.

News Magazine	Description
Fortune	Conglomerate Ownership, Business News
Newsweek	Corporate Ownership, General News
U.S. News & World Report	Corporate Ownership, General News

- Fortune: Fortune is Time Warner's business-related newsmagazine. Recently, AOL merged with Time-Warner. Thus, AOL-Time Warner has become the biggest media conglomerate. Fortune ownership has twice changed recently in the Time-Life and Warner merger and the AOL-Time Warner merger. If BusinessWeek is the Burger King of business journals, Fortune's cafeteria is at the Harvard Business School. The Fortune's circulation is 681,337.[4] Time Warner is the largest publisher of magazines in the United States and owns several popular consumer titles such as Time, Life, Money, People, and Entertainment Weekly.
- Newsweek: Newsweek is owned by the Washington Post Co., which is the major holding of the Graham family of Washington, D.C., Newsweek focuses on general news; it appeared in 1933 and has a circulation of 3.2 million in weekly.
- U.S. News & World Report: Like Newsweek, this magazine focuses on general news. Formerly, the magazine was called U.S. News; today it is known as U.S. News & World Report with a circulation of 2.3 million.

Overall, for millions of Americans, coverage of merger events was provided by these principal weekly news magazines.

Time Period: A list of all merger news stories for the six-year period from 1993 to 1998 was drawn from the ProQuest database, which contains news abstracts of major news magazines in the United States. The systematic sample was limited to articles that appeared between January 1, 1993, and December 30, 1999, because this period represents 1990s' major merger events as well as including the Telecommunication Act of 1996. The initial sample resulted in 527 articles. These were subsequently inspected by hand to exclude articles not directly related to the merger. Thus, final content analysis articles were 519 stories. Table 1 shows the sampled news:

Table 1.
Distribution of Mergers News by Magazine and Years

Year Title	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**Total**
Fortune	35	32	36	49	73	82	306
Newsweek	12	17	19	11	13	33	105
U.S. News & World Report	13	20	16	7	26	34	116
Total	60	69	71	67	112	149	527
Re-fine total	**58**	**67**	**68**	**66**	**111**	**149**	**519**

The full text of the sampled news articles was printed from the real print-version of the magazines. The researcher and another coder coded the articles, for a ten-day sample of the news during the same period to check the inter-coder reliability.

Coding Units

---

[4] Circulation figures listed here are : Standard Rate & Data Service, SRDS Circulation 98: The 36th annual comprehensive analysis of penetration and circulation of major print media.

The unit of analysis in this study is an entire story. Thus, this study's coding unit is the whole news article including photo and picture. The coder used colored markers to identify variables, and then fill out the coding sheet. Nine variables were coded for each news articles: three were strictly objective variables: publication, date, and length. Other variables coded were format of story, presence of illustrations, news tone, news type, story orientation, and geographic location, which required judgment on the part of the coder.

Coding procedure:

Variables are operationalized as outlined in the Coding Rules: All the coding materials are copied from sampled magazines as well as printed out from the ProQuest database. The researcher used the words "mergers" and "acquisitions" to search ProQuest. This identified 518 such stories. All these news stories were directly printed from original news magazines. The news abstract from the ProQuest database was also printed. The printed and copied articles were numbered and grouped according to news magazine title and date before coding began.

Coding Variables

The coding units are whole news item, and the variables include nine variables: format of story, illustrations, tone, length, news types, orientation, and news locations.

Format of Story

Although the format of news stories is generally indicated by the page where the news item appears, the coder should use the following rules in addition to define the format of the story. The format types are defined as follows:

News: is defined as factual reports based on actual news, situation, event, announcement, reporting and investigating.

Commentary/opinion is defined as an article in which the writer or columnist expresses an opinion or comments on the issues. This category will include opinions and letters from outside.

Feature is a story that goes beyond factual news reporting with emphasis on human nature.

Editorial is an opinion article written by an editor or editor-in-chief.

Illustrations: Illustrations include pictures, graphs, charts, cartoons, or any other type of lines drawings. The number of illustration accompanying each story were coded. ProQuest provided the number of illustrations but recount was made from the original version of the magazines.

Tone

The article's tone can be discovered by reading the abstract of the news stories if necessary to the story. Coders are required read to understand as the **context unit**. Tone has three categories: 1=favorable, 2 =neutral, and 3=unfavorable/critical.

Favorable or supportive (positive): Those merger news items reflecting social cohesion and cooperation as well as political and economic stability or strength. If what they describe leaves the reader with a generally favorable view of the merger or acquisition, it has a favorable tone. Most articles in this category relate to stronger competition and business prospects or bright future result.

Non-favorable (Negative): those items that report social conflict and disorganization as well as political and economic instability or weakness. Unfavorability is judged on the basis of social or political tensions. Articles dwell upon frightening or pessimistic issues such as loss of diversity, scapegoating or threats to freedom of speech.

Neutral: those items that reflect neither favorable nor unfavorable conditions either through the balance of content or a lack of controversial material. Neutral articles exhibited a balance between favorable and non-favorable or convey neither positive nor negative views

News Length: Total length is calculated on the total number of paragraphs. Thus, this research counts the paragraphs and then code the number in the coding sheet.

News Types

News type has three categories: media, non-media and combined mergers or acquisition.

Media Merger: those news items that are mainly about mergers between organizations in media industry.

Non-media Merger: those news items that cover mergers between general business or non-media such as Chase and other banks.

Combined: the merger is between media and non-media. For example, a merger between a cable company and bank.

News Orientation

Event-oriented categories: the starting points of the story must be a timely event and must include a place and time.

Issue-oriented categories: Include stories that provide an overview of or background for mergers or acquisitions. In terms of news structure, the issue is the starting point of the article, rather than a specific event pinpointing times and places.

Geographical Location:

Geographical location has three categories: U.S., Europe, and other, which include Asia/Austria, and Africa/Latin America and other. The U.S.: the corporations belong to the U.S. Europe: corporation belongs to the European continent. Others include the companies that mainly belongs to Asia, Australia or other. When merger news involves more than one country, the coder has considerable responsibilities to decide which company has the main role. If you still could not decide the main role's country, you code other.

Coding Procedures:

The researcher instructed the coders on the procedure for coding. Two graduate students in the College of Mass Communication and Media Art at SIUC coded the sampled news magazines. Each coder coded assigned days and magazines.

Data Processing

The data were processed both "data-screen" and "data cleaning," then data were input. To test the research hypotheses a chi-square (χ^2), t-test and ANOVA were computed using SPSS/UNIX.

Reliability:

Intercoder reliability was checked in a ten-day sample of the news during first day of session. The formula used is Holsti's formula [5] (Wimmer, 1991,173). Each coder recorded sampled days and compared the coders' agreement for each unit of analysis: format of story, news tone, number of paragraphs, news types, orientations of stories, and news locations. The intercoder reliability for magazines is 100%, format of story is 82.7%, tone 85.9%, news types 93.5%, orientation of stories 91.8%, and news location 91.2%. The intra-coder reliability for format of story is 89.0%, tone is 88.9%, news types are 98.3%, orientation of stories is 93.5%, and news location is 97.7%.

Inter-coder and Intra-coder Reliability Score

Categories	Inter-Coder	Intra-Coder
Format of Story	82.7 %	89.0 %
Tone	85.9 %	88.9 %
News Types	93.5 %	98.3 %
Orientation of Stories	91.8 %	93.5 %
News Location	91.2 %	97.7 %
Mean Score	89.0%	93.5%

---

[5] Reliability = 2M / N1 + N2 where M = the total number of items upon which coders agreed, N1 = the total number of items examined by the first coder and N2 = the total number of items examined by the second coder.

Results

All news and stories were coded and analyzed according to the research design and the hypotheses. As was noted in the research hypotheses, this study draws comparisons among several variables: between media and non-media merger, before and after the Telecommunication Act of 1996, and types of magazines. Also, this study included the merger coverage style and news locations.

Testing H1.

Hypothesis 1 states that the news frequencies about media mergers are greater than the news about non-media mergers in news media. Total frequencies are N=518; media merger n=195, non-media merger n=294 and combined n=30. In the frequencies, the portions of media merger are not greater than that of news about non-media mergers (Table 2). Thus, the hypothesis is failed because the frequencies in non-media are greater then media mergers.

Table 2.
Frequencies of Media and Non-media Mergers

Merger Type	Frequency		Expected
	N	%	
Media merger	195	(37.6%)	172.67
Non-media Merger	294	(56.8%)	172.67
Other	29	(5.6 %)	172.67
Total	519	100%	

Chi-square (χ^2) = 207.69 (df = 2 p=.0000)

Testing H1-a: On the other hand, in hypothesis 1-a, media merger coverage has more favorable than non-media merger coverage. News media favorably cover media mergers, while unfavorably covering the non-media mergers. Although news media do not always favor media mergers compared to non-media merger in item frequencies, a close look suggests that news media favor cover for media-merger in number of paragraphs (Table 3). The media mergers have more paragraphs of favorable coverage (x=11.90) than non-media (x=5.81) in favorable paragraphs although there were fewer news items in media mergers. Thus, Hypothesis 1-a is supported (Table 3 and Appendix Table2).

Table 3.
Average Paragraphs by News Types

News Types	Mean of Paragraphs		
	Favor 1)	Neutral 2)	Non-favor 3)
Media Merger	11.90	6.80	1.72
Non-Media Merger	5.81	5.01	3.98
Mean Difference	6.09	1.79	-2.27

*Combined mergers was not included
1) (F= 47.521, P=.001)
2) (F= 1.9, P=.165)
3) (F= 20.3, P= .001)

Overall, news media positively cover both media and non-media mergers. In media mergers, mean paragraph score of favorable coverage is 11.90, while unfavorable cover is 1.72. Whereas, in non-media merger, 5.81 of favorable, 3.98 of non-favorable. Out of a total of 6356 paragraphs, 19.2 % of the news is favorable in media merger (Appendix Table 12,13).

Testing H2

This study found that there were significantly both more favorable tone and frequencies toward mergers after the Act of 1996 than before.

Testing H2: The frequencies of coverage increased after the Telecommunication Act of 1996. The frequency increased from 1993 to 1998. Total numbers of merger news before the Act are 194 (37.4%), while total numbers after the Act are 325 (62.6%). Thus, the hypothesis 2 is supported (Appendix Table 3 and 4).

Testing H2-a: The favorable tone to merger coverage increased from 23.6% to 45.2%, while both neutral and unfavorable coverage decreased from 46.9% to 36.9% and from 26.8% to 16.9% (Table 4). Also the tone changed from negative to positive for mergers. Thus, the Hypothesis 2 was supported at the level of Chi-square (χ^2) = 21.11 (df=2, p=. 001). The Telecommunication Act of 1996 had a positive effect rather than negative one.

Table 4.

Number of Tone Before and After Telecom. Act of 1996

Tone	Time	
	Before Act of 1996	After Act of 1996
Favorable	51(26.3%)	150(45.2%)
Neutral	91(46.9%)	120(36.9%)
Unfavorable	52(26.8%)	55(16.9%)
Total	100%	100%

Chi-square (χ^2) = 21.11 (df=2, p=.001)

Testing H3.

Business-focused media (Fortune) covered more non-media mergers (71.0%) while 22.7% of media-merger, whereas general news focused magazines (Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report) focus on more media merger news: Newsweek had 58.0% of media merger while 28.2 % of Non-media merger, and U.S. News & World Report covered 49.6% of media merger and 45.2% of non-media merger (Table 5). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported at the level of Chi-square (χ^2) = 76.49 (df= 4, p=. 001).

Table 5.
Frequencies of Title by Types of News

Title	Frequencies		
	Media	Non-media	Other
Fortune	68 (22.7%)	213 (71.0%)	19 (5.3%)
Newsweek	70 (58.0%)	29 (28.2%)	4 (3.9%)
U.S. News & World.	57 (49.6%)	52 (45.2%)	6 (5.2%)

Chi-square (χ^2) = 76.49 (df = 4, p=.001)

Testing H3-a

In the frequencies, Fortune, which is a business-focus news magazine with conglomerate ownership, has more favorable coverage for non-media coverage—213 stories (71.0%), whereas Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report devoted 71stories (68.9%) and 57 stories (49.6%) to media mergers (Appendix Table 6).

On the other hand, Fortune had more favorable coverage of non-media mergers (75%), whereas favorable media mergers coverage was (24%). Newsweek had a different coverage. Newsweek gave more favorable coverage to media mergers (61.1%) than non-media mergers (33.2%). U.S. News & World Report has similar Tone for media mergers (57.1%) and non-media mergers (37.1%) (Table 6). General news magazines covered more media mergers than non-media merger. Thus, the Hypothesis 3-a was confirmed.

Table 6.
Frequencies of Favorable Types by Titles

Merger	Tone	Magazine		
		Fortune	Newsweek	U.S. News & World
Media	Favorable	32 (24%)	22 (61.1%)	20 (57.1%)
Non- Media	Favorable	97 (75%)	12 (33.2%)	13 (37.1%)
	Total	99%	94.3%	94.2 % *

Chi-square (χ^2)=33.99 (df=4, p=.00000) *Total is not 100% not include others

Testing H4.

In hypotheses 4, news magazines present issue-related coverage for media merger but event-related coverage for non-media merger. This H4 was supported at the level of Chi-square (χ^2)= 15.14 (df = 2 p=.001)). Media merger has more issue-oriented (48.1%), whereas non-media merger has more event-oriented (53.0%).

Table 7
Frequencies of Orientation by News Types

Orientation of News	Media	Non-media	Combined	Total
Issue-Oriented	88(48.1%)	83(45.4%)	12(5.6%)	100%
Event-Oriented	107(31.9%)	211(53.0%)	17(5.1%)	100%
Total	195	294	29	518

Chi-square (χ^2)= 15.14 (df = 2 p=.001)

Although non-media mergers have more news items, the numbers of paragraphs are reversed: media merger has more paragraphs than non-media merger. Media mergers have a deeper focus than non-media.[6] Also all three-news magazines covered merger news as event-oriented (64.5%) and issue-oriented (35.4%). Descriptively, news magazines cover merger news as more event rather than issue oriented (Table 7-1).

Table 7-1.
Frequencies of Orientation of News

Orientation of News	Number	Expected
Issue-Oriented	183 (35.4%)	259.0
Event-Oriented	335 (64.5%)	259.0
Total	519 (100%)	

Chi-square (χ^2)= 45.1 (df= 1, p=.0000)

Testing H4-a: Hypothesis H4-a states that news story coverage merger-news did as "event-related coverage," while feature formats did "issue-related coverage." The statistics show that "News format" has 221(75.4%) of event coverage while 72 (24.6%) were issue-related coverage, whereas "Feature format" has 58.4% were issue related, and 41.6% of event coverage. Thus news are event, while features are issue-related coverage

---

[6] Consequently, in the merger news coverage, there was mixed coverage between episodic (35.0%) and thematic (64.7%). On the other hand, the framing of stories about poverty, unemployment and racial inequality on television news are thematic. Poverty was 66% of episodic, whereas 34 % was thematic. Coverage of unemployment was primarily thematic (60%) and racial inequality coverage (50%) was an equal mixture of both. Episodic framing made viewers or readers.

(Appendix Table 9). Therefor H4-a was supported at the level of Chi-square (χ^2)= 15.14 (df = 2, p=.001).

Testing H5

All three-news magazines focused on mergers in the U.S. rather than internationally. Thus, hypothesis 5 was supported. This news location implies that merger is the last stage of late capitalism: actual merger activity happened more often in U.S. business strategies in the 1990s. 95.4% of the merger news is the U.S news locations, while 4.7% is out side of the U.S. (Table 8).

Table 8.
Frequencies of News Location (Npar test)

News Location		Number	Expected
U.S.		495 (95.4%)	173.0
Europe		19 (3.7%)	173.0
Other		5 (1.0%)	173.0
	Total	519 (100%)	

Chi-square (χ^2)= 899.56 (df= 2, p= .001)

Testing H5-a: the hypothesis is that U.S. merger news is more favorable than non-U.S. merger news. This hypothesis was not supported at the level of Chi-square (χ^2) = 4.22049 (df = 2, p=.12). This means that all three U.S. news magazines did not biased coverage for news locations (Appendix Table 10).

Qualitative Analysis

The merger coverage's title has shifted from negative to moderate. For example, more negative titles came from the early 1990s: "Big brother's holding company"

(Newsweek, October 25, 1993); "Merger mania II" (Fortune (Oct 3, 1994) and "Merger mania fat profits make the big banks look good" (Fortune, Aug 7, 1995). More positive or favorable titles appeared in the late 1990s: "The friendly giant" (Newsweek, Feb. 19, 1996), "AOL's Netscape romance" (Newsweek, November 30, 1998). That means news media in the early 1990s viewed the mergers or acquisitions as negative or unfavorable news events, but late 1990s news media regard mergers as positive social events. These qualitative observations and examples support the quanitative conclusion of the merger coverage. After the Telecommunication Act of 1996, the media turned from a favorable tone toward merger as social phenomenon.

Another characteristic of merger news coverage is the "future oriented frame." Some news stories predict that a merger event will be happen within the next year or the next few months. The sampled news title shows that the merger will happen sooner or later: "Time Warner and Tuner have an urge to merge" (Fortune, Jan 15, 1996), "Ted Turner emerges in different light" (U.S. News & World Report, Sep. 11, 1995), "We will buy your Web site" (U.S. News & World report, Aug 10, 1998). These titles are mainly media merger and favorable tone news for future events. These titles and coverage imply news media framed media merger direction and people's opinion. That also supports the hypothesis that news media more favorably cover media mergers than non-media mergers.

Still another qualitative analysis show that news media provide the reason of the merger or acquisitions. The tone is like that of a public relation or persuasion titles: "Why Disney had to buy ABC" (Fortune, Sep.4 1995), "Citigroup: A progress report" (Fortune, Nov 23, 1998), "Why bank mergers are good for your savings account"

(Fortune, October2, 1995), "Why Bill Gates and Steve Jobs made up" (U.S. News & World Report, Aug 18-25, 1997). These news stories provide not only information but also tone of public agenda.

Conclusion

Like other studies, this research has several limitations, such as not including ownership variables, and not including newspapers and TV. Also, this content analysis may not explain people's perception for merger coverage. Furthermore, the small cell size in certain chi-squares may have problems. Thus, future studies should increase the sample size and combined survey method with content analysis to find out the cause of people's perception.

However, I believe that this study does make several important contributions to the body of knowledge pertaining to the news media's coverage of merger news. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that news media did favorably coverage merger news; media mergers especially have more favorable coverage than non-media do.

Second, this study was also instrumental in testing certain theories in the field of mass communication. Media framing based on an organization's interests social-governmental policy, and media experience. There are related between news coverage and both government policy and focusing area, which affect the merger coverage.

Third, although government influence and social movement seem to play a significant role in how merger news was portrayed in news media, the findings of this study also led to the discovery of other important variables that were at play but were ignored in the present study. These variables are ownership relation values and culture (social trend).

To conclude, this study found that the news media frame merger on various levels and related to their interests. Media mergers were covered as issues-related, while non-media mergers were covered as event related. Bilateral relations between government policy and the logic of capitalism have changed in the 1990s. These changes affect the business environment as well as the journalistic autonomous paradigm. After the Telecommunication Act of 1996, the news amount and orientation toward mergers turned favorable coverage.

References

Bagdikian, Ben H. (1995). The media monopoly. Boston: Beacon Press.

Berelson, B. (1952). Content analysis in communication research. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.

Carey, James W. (1986). The Dark Continent of American Journalism in Robert Karl Manoff and Michael Schudson. Reading the news (eds.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Chan-Olmsted, Sylvia (1998) Mergers, acquisitions, and convergence: The strategic of broadcasting, cable television, and telephone service. The Journal of Media Economics, 11(3): 33-46.

Congress maps a telecom future. (1996, Feb. 2). Chicago Tribune, p. 1-14.

Conaway, Carol B. (1996). Framing identity: The press in Crown Heights. Harvard University Press: Research paper R-16.

Croteau, D., and Hoynes W. (1997). Media/Society: Industry, Images, and Audiences.Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.P.38 39.

Davis, Joel J. (1995). The effects of message framing on response to environmental communication. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 72(2):285-299.

Entman, R.M.. (1991). Framing U.S. coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran air incidents. Journal of Communication, 41(4): 6-27.

Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. Levy, M & Gurevitch, M. (eds.), Defining Media Studies, New York: Oxford University Press.

Entman, R.M.. (1991). Framing U.S. coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran air incidents. Journal of Communication, 41(4): 6-27.

Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. Levy, M & Gurevitch, M. (eds.), Defining Media Studies, New York: Oxford University Press.

Gamson, W.A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W. & Sasson, T. (1991). Media images and the social construction of reality. Annual Review of Sociology. 18, 373-393.

Gitlin, T. (1980). The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left. Berkeley: University California Press.

Fico, F. And Soffin, S., (1995). Fairness and Balance of selected newspaper coverage of controversial national, state, and local issues. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly. 72(3): 621-633.

Hall, S (1982). The rediscovery of ideology: Return of the repressed in media studies, in M. Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran and J. Woolacott (Eds.) Culture, Society and the Media. New York: Routledge, pp.56-90.

Harris, Kathryn (1995). Lights ! Camera! Regulation! Fortune. New York: September 4; Vol. 132(5): 83.

Holsti, O.R. (1979). Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Kenny, Keith and Simpson, Chris (1996). Was coverage of the 1998 presidential race by Washington` two major dailies biased? Journalism Quarterly 70 (3): 345-354.

Krosnick, J. A, and Kinder, D. R., (1990). "Altering the foundations of support for the president through priming." American Political Science Review. 84(2): 497-512.

Kuhn, Thomas (1970). The Structure of Scientific Revolution, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee, Tien-tsung et al (1997). The impact of media ownership: How Time and Warner's merger influences Times content. Paper Presented to the Magazine Division, AEJMC 1997 Annual Convention, and July 30-Aug 2, Chicago.

Leweke, Robert W. (1997). "Drug Problem and Government Solutions: A Frame Analysis of front-page Newspaper Headlines About the Drug Issue, 1987-1994." Unpublished the AEJMC National Conference Mass Communication and Society Division.

Lippmann, Walter (1922). Public Opinion. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Mandel, E. (1987) Late Capitalism. London: New Left Books.

McChesney, R.M. (1999). Oligopoly: The big media game has fewer and fewer players. The Pressive Medision: Wisconsin November: 20-24.

McCombs, M., and Shaw, D.L. (1972). The agenda setting function of mass media. Public Opinion Quarterly. 36(2): 176-187.

McCombs, M. (1987). Effect of monopoly in Cleveland on diversity of newspaper content. Journalism Quarterly. 64 (1): 740-744.

McChesney, R. (1996). The Internet and U.S. communication policymaking in historical and critical perspective. Journal of Communication. 46 (1), pp. 98-124.

Miller, Randy and Wanta, Wayne (1997). "Race as a variable in agenda setting." Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly. 73(4): 913-925.

Murdock, G. and Golding, P. (1977) Capitalism, communication and class relations in Curran, J. (eds) Mass Communication and Society. London: Arnold.

Paletz, D and Entman R.M. (1981). Media, Power, Politics. New York: The Free Press.

Pavlik, J. (1998). New Media Technology: Cultural and Commercial Perspectives. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Rosston, Gregory and Waterman, David (1997). Interconnection and the Internet: Selected papers from the 1996 Telecommunications policy research conference. Lawrence Erlbaum: New Jersey.

Tankard, J., and Ryan, M (1974). News source perceptions of accuracy of science coverage. Journalism Quarterly 51: 219-225.

Tuchman, Gaye (1973). Making News by doing work: Routinizing the unexpected. American Journal of Sociology, 79. 110-131.

Turow, Joseph. (1997). Media systems in society: Understanding industries, strategies and power. New York: Longman.

U.S. Department of Commerce, (1993). Globalization of the Mass Media. January.

Weber, R.P. (1990). Basic content analysis (2^{nd} ed.) Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Appendices

Table 1

Frequencies of News Types

```
                                 Cases
                      Category  Observed  Expected  Residual

    Media Merger             1       195    172.67     22.33
    Non Media Merger         2       294    172.67    121.33
    Combined both media      3        29    172.67   -143.67
                                     ---
                         Total       518
```

*Chi-square (χ^2) =207.69 (df=2, p=.0000)

·Frequencies

```
                                                         Valid     Cum
Value Label                  Value  Frequency  Percent  Percent  Percent

Media Merger                     1        195     37.6     37.6     37.6
Non Media Merger                 2        294     56.6     56.8     94.4
Combined both media              3         29      5.6      5.6    100.0
                                      -------  -------  -------
                             Total        519    100.0    100.0


    Count   Midpoint    One symbol equals approximately  8.00
occurrences

     195         1 |************************:*
     294         2 |************************************:**
      29         3 |****.
                   +----+----+----+----+----+----+----+----+----+----+
                   0        80       160       240       320       400
                             Histogram frequency
```

Table 2.

Frequencies of News Types by Tone

```
            Row Pct  |Favorabl Neutral  Unfavorb
            Col Pct  |e or Sup or Balan ale or C    Row
                     |     1  |     2  |     3  | Total
         ------------+--------+--------+--------+
                   1 |    74  |    84  |    37  |   195
 Media Merger        |  37.9  |  43.1  |  19.0  |  37.6
                     +--------+--------+--------+
                   2 |   122  |   107  |    65  |   294
 Non Media Merger    |  41.5  |  36.4  |  22.1  |  56.8
                     +--------+--------+--------+
        -          3 |     4  |    20  |     5  |    29
 Combined both me    |  13.8  |  69.0  |  17.2  |   5.6
                     +--------+--------+--------+
             Column     200      211      107       518
              Total    38.6     40.7     20.7     100.0
```

*Chi-square (χ^2) =13.30974 df=4 p=.00986

Table 3.

Distribution of News Types by News Date Year

```
           Count |
         Row Pct |
                 |     93|     94|     95|     96|     97|     98| Total
        ---------+-------+-------+-------+-------+-------+-------+
               1 |     20|     35|     31|     33|     37|     40|   196
Media Merger     |   10.2|   17.9|   15.8|   16.8|   18.9|   20.4|  37.8
                 +-------+-------+-------+-------+-------+-------+
               2 |     36|     29|     32|     33|     62|    101|   293
Non Media Merger |   12.3|    9.9|   10.9|   11.3|   21.2|   34.5|  56.6
                 +-------+-------+-------+-------+-------+-------+
               3 |      2|      3|      5|       |     11|      8|    29
Combined both me |    6.9|   10.3|   17.2|       |   37.9|   27.6|   5.6
                 +-------+-------+-------+-------+-------+-------+
          Column       58      67      68      66     110     149    518
           Total     11.2    12.9    13.1    12.7    21.2    28.8  100.0
```

*Chi-square (χ^2) = 28.60082 df=10 p=.00145

Table 4.

Cross Tab of Tone by News Date Year

```
                    1=1993, 1994, 1995
                    2=1996, 1997, 1998
           Count  |
         Row Pct  |
         Col Pct  |                Row
         Tot Pct  |Befor1|After2| Total
Q7      ----------+------+------+
              1   |    51|   150|   201
Favorable or Sup  |  25.4|  74.6|  38.7
                  |  26.3|  46.2|
                  |   9.8|  28.9|
                  +------+------+
              2   |    91|   120|   211
Neutral or Balan  |  43.1|  56.9|  40.7
                  |  46.9|  36.9|
                  |  17.5|  23.1|
                  +------+------+
              3   |    52|    55|   107
Unfavorbale or C  |  48.6|  51.4|  20.6
                  |  26.8|  16.9|
                  |  10.0|  10.6|
                  +------+------+
          Column     194    325    519
           Total    37.4   62.6  100.0
```

*Chi-square (χ^2)= 21.11053 df=2 p=.00003

Table 5.
Frequencies of Magazine by News Types

```
1= Fortune
2= Collapsed both Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report

          Count  |
        Row Pct  |Media Me Non Medi Combined
        Col Pct  |rger     a Merger  both me   Row
        Tot Pct  |      1 |      2 |      3 | Total
       ----------+--------+--------+--------+
              1  |    68  |   213  |    19  |   300
                 |  22.7  |  71.0  |   6.3  |  57.9
  Business       |  34.9  |  72.4  |  65.5  |
                 |  13.1  |  41.1  |   3.7  |
                 +--------+--------+--------+
              2  |   127  |    81  |    10  |   218
                 |  58.3  |  37.2  |   4.6  |  42.1
  General News   |  65.1  |  27.6  |  34.5  |
                 |  24.5  |  15.6  |   1.9  |
                 +--------+--------+--------+
         Column     195      294       29      518
          Total    37.6     56.8      5.6    100.0
```

*Chi-square (χ^2) = 68.65 (df = 2 p=.00000)

Table 6.

Frequencies of Magazine Title by News Types

```
1=Fortune
2=Newsweek
3=U.S. News & World Report

           Count  |
         Row Pct  |Media Me Non Medi Combined
         Col Pct  |rger     a Merger  both me    Row
         Tot Pct  |     1  |     2  |      3  | Total
         ---------+--------+--------+---------+
               1  |    68  |   213  |     19  |   300
                  |  22.7  |  71.0  |    6.3  |  57.9
                  |  34.9  |  72.4  |   65.5  |
                  |  13.1  |  41.1  |    3.7  |
                  +--------+--------+---------+
               2  |    70  |    29  |      4  |   103
                  |  68.0  |  28.2  |    3.9  |  19.9
                  |  35.9  |   9.9  |   13.8  |
                  |  13.5  |   5.6  |     .8  |
                  +--------+--------+---------+
               3  |    57  |    52  |      6  |   115
                  |  49.6  |  45.2  |    5.2  |  22.2
                  |  29.2  |  17.7  |   20.7  |
                  |  11.0  |  10.0  |    1.2  |
                  +--------+--------+---------+
          Column      195      294        29     518
           Total     37.6     56.8       5.6   100.0
```

*Chi-square (χ^2)= 76.49337 (df=4 p=.00000)

Table 7.
Orientation of Stories by News Types

```
                                   Cases
                         Category  Observed  Expected  Residual

Issue Oriented                  1       183    259.50    -76.50
Event Oriented                  2       336    259.50     76.50
                                        ---
                            Total       519
```

* Chi-square (χ^2)= 45.10 (df=1. p=.0000)

Table 8.

Frequencies: Orientation of Stories by Tone

```
                   Count  |
                  Row Pct |Favorabl Neutral  Unfavorb
                  Col Pct |e or Sup or Balan ale or C   Row
                  Tot Pct |    1   |    2   |    3   | Total
                  --------+--------+--------+--------+
                        1 |   73   |   69   |   41   |   183
  Issue Oriented          |  39.9  |  37.7  |  22.4  |  35.3
                          |  36.3  |  32.7  |  38.3  |
                          |  14.1  |  13.3  |   7.9  |
                          +--------+--------+--------+
                        2 |  128   |  142   |   66   |   336
  Event Oriented          |  38.1  |  42.3  |  19.6  |  64.7
                          |  63.7  |  67.3  |  61.7  |
                          |  24.7  |  27.4  |  12.7  |
                          +--------+--------+--------+
                   Column    201      211      107      519
                    Total    38.7     40.7     20.6    100.0
```

*Chi-square (χ^2)= 1.14 (df=2, p=.56)

Table 9.

Frequencies of Format of Story by Orientation of Stories

```
              Count   |
            Row Pct   |Issue Or Event Or
            Col Pct   |iented    iented      Row
            Tot Pct   |     1   |     2   | Total
            ----------+---------+---------+
                   1  |    72   |   221   |   293
  News                |  24.6   |  75.4   |  56.5
                      |  39.3   |  65.8   |
                      |  13.9   |  42.6   |
                      +---------+---------+
                   2  |    47   |    63   |   110
  Column or Opinio    |  42.7   |  57.3   |  21.2
                      |  25.7   |  18.8   |
                      |   9.1   |  12.1   |
                      +---------+---------+
                   3  |    59   |    42   |   101
  Feature             |  58.4   |  41.6   |  19.5
                      |  32.2   |  12.5   |
                      |  11.4   |   8.1   |
                      +---------+---------+
                   4  |     5   |     7   |    12
  Editorial           |  41.7   |  58.3   |   2.3
                      |   2.7   |   2.1   |
                      |   1.0   |   1.3   |
                      +---------+---------+
                   5  |         |     3   |     3
  Other               |         | 100.0   |    .6
                      |         |    .9   |
                      |         |    .6   |
                      +---------+---------+
             Column       183       336     519
              Total      35.3      64.7   100.0
```

*Chi-Square = 42.92 (df = 4 p=.00000)

Table 10.

Frequencies of News Location by Tone

```
             Count   |
             Row Pct |Favorabl Neutral  Unfavora
             Col Pct |e or Sup or Balan ble or C     Row
             Tot Pct |     1  |     2  |     3  |   Total
             --------+--------+--------+--------+
                   1 |   196  |   200  |    99  |    495
USA                  |  39.6  |  40.4  |  20.0  |   95.4
                     |  97.5  |  94.8  |  92.5  |
                     |  37.8  |  38.5  |  19.1  |
                     +--------+--------+--------+
                   2 |     5  |    11  |     8  |     24
Europe/Other         |  20.8  |  45.8  |  33.3  |    4.6
                     |   2.5  |   5.2  |   7.5  |
                     |   1.0  |   2.1  |   1.5  |
                     +--------+--------+--------+
              Column     201      211      107       519
               Total    38.7     40.7     20.6     100.0
```

*Chi-square (χ^2) = 4.22049 (df = 2 p=.12121)

Table 11.
Frequencies of News Location

```
                              Cases
                 Category   Observed   Expected   Residual

USA                     1        495     173.00     322.00
Europe                  2         19     173.00    -154.00
Other                   3          5     173.00    -168.00
                                 ---
                    Total        519
```

*Chi-square (χ^2) = 899.56 (df=2, p=.0000)

Table 12

T-tests for Independent Samples of News Types by Tone

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Favor Number of Paragraphs				
Media Merger	194	11.9021	23.097	1.658
Non Media Merger	294	5.8129	11.351	.662

Mean Difference = 6.089.
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 47.521 P= .000

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
NeutralNumber of Paragraphs				
Media Merger	195	6.8000	12.808	.917
Non Media Merger	294	5.0136	10.089	.588

Mean Difference = 1.7864
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 1.935 P= .165

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
Non Favor Number of Paragraphs				
Media Merger	195	1.7179	4.671	.335
Non Media Merger	294	3.9830	10.836	.632

Mean Difference = -2.2650
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 20.306 P= .000

Table 13.

ANOVA Table for Pharagraph by News Types

```
* A N A L Y S I S   O F   V A R I A N C E * * *
news Types - media merger
             Non-media merger
             Combined
                 Favor Number of Paragraphs by News Types

Source of Variation              Sum of                  Mean
                                 Squares      DF        Square        F    Sig
                                                                           of F

Between group                   5408.987       2      2704.494    9.834   .000

Within                        141350.816     514       275.002

Total                         146759.803     516       284.418


            * * * A N A L Y S I S   O F   V A R I A N C E * * *

                 NeutralNumber of Paragraphs By News Types

Source of Variation              Sum of                  Mean
                                 Squares      DF        Square        F    Sig
                                                                           of F

Between group                    627.118       2       313.559    2.481   .085

Within                         64958.131     514       126.378

Total                          65585.250     516       127.103


            * * * A N A L Y S I S   O F   V A R I A N C E * * *

               Non Favor Number of Paragraphs By  News Types

Source of Variation              Sum of                  Mean
                                 Squares      DF        Square        F    Sig
                                                                           of F

Between Group                    743.267       2       371.633    4.380   .013

Within                         43616.470     514        84.857

Total                          44359.737     516        85.968
```

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Thinking about Health:
The relationship of mass media and cognition to perceptions of children's health

Bryan H. Reber
Doctoral Student
University of Missouri
School of Journalism

Home address:
12 Yorkshire Dr.
Columbia, MO. 65203
(573) 446-3046
Email: c750663@showme.missouri.edu

Presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Phoenix, Az., August 8-12, 2000

Thinking about Health:
The relationship of mass media and cognition to perceptions of children's health

Abstract

How media use and cognitive work contribute to perceptions of children's health and quality of life issues was tested in a survey of 1,238 adults. Demographics were predictors of cognitive work and media use on children's health issues. High cognitive work on children's health issues was significantly related to pessimistic perceptions about the status of children's health. High television exposure and attention were related to optimistic perceptions. Cognitive work led to more accurate assessments of the health situation.

Introduction and Literature

Introduction

Kansas Action for Children (KAC) is a private non-profit organization whose goal is to "ensure that the needs and rights of children in the state of Kansas are identified and met" (About Kansas..., para. 1). The organization gathers and distributes data regarding the health and welfare of Kansas children. They distribute the information via the mass media as well as through their own printed materials such as Kansas Kids Count DataBook 1998. Among their projects is an annual "Report Card" through which they assess the progress made on specific children's and teenagers' health and well-being issues over the past year. Their interest is in raising awareness among Kansas citizens and legislators regarding the status of Kansas' children.

Media roles in social issues

The mass media play a role in this effort to build grass root support for children's health issues. The importance of mass media in health campaigns is well documented (Wallack, 1990; Flay & Burton, 1990; Milio, 1985).

The media play a broad role in contributing to attitudes about and understanding of social issues. For example, substantial research has been done on the effects of media on social attitudes such as fear of violence (Gerbner, Gross, Eleey, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox & Signorielli, 1977; Heath, 1984; Heath & Gilbert, 1996; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Smith, 1984; Williams & Dickinson, 1993). Likewise, media effects on personal and public health concerns have been tested (Brown & Walsh-Childers, 1994; Fisher, Gandy & Janus, 1981; Flay & Burton, 1990; Milio, 1985; Valente & Saba, 1998; Wallack, 1990).

Other research has shown that media use contributes to perception of quality of life

(Morgan, 1984). And the level of issue involvement by the media consumer has been shown to accurately predict knowledge and attitudes (Chaffee & Roser, 1986).

Taking previous research on related topics into consideration, the primary question of this study is how might media use and thinking about issues contribute to perceptions of children's and teenager's health and quality of life issues?

Media Use and Its Effects

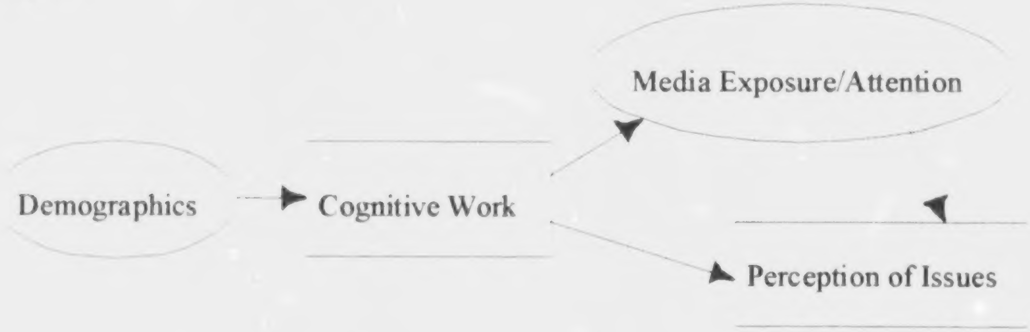
Since the late 1960s there has been substantial research done on the social implications of heavy television viewing (Gerbner, 1970; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980). Likewise, research has shown that media use affects attitudes toward social issues such as crime (Graber, 1980; Heath, 1984), politics (Eveland & McLeod,1995; Kosicki & McLeod,1989) as well as health issues (Valente & Saba, 1998).

The television research was extended to address health portrayals and concerns (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1982). Morgan (1984) noted that heavy viewers of television describe their lives as less fulfilling and more depressing. The concept of cultivation theory, described in its most basic terms, is that heavy television viewers have their attitudes cultivated in such a way that they begin to mirror what is represented in the media.

Not only does media use cultivate a "media world" it shapes public opinion and attitudes. Funkhouser (1973) noted that "news coverage and public opinion are strongly related on an overall basis" (67). Content analyses have shown that some social issues are heavily covered while others go nearly unnoticed. Artwick & Gordon (1998) found that crime (17.3%) and city services (16.1%) stories dominated the news pages of eight daily newspapers, while health (2.2%) and social problems (3.1%) were only modestly represented.

The perceived importance of media to social issues generally and health campaigns specifically leads to the proposal of a model to identify predictors of perception. Based on media use theory, attitudinal observations and the efficacy of mass media in creating awareness and knowledge, an information model was developed. The model in Figure 1 suggests that demographic characteristics contribute to cognition regarding children's and teenagers' health and well-being. Cognition, in turn, predicts media exposure and attention to specific subjects related to the interest of the demographic profile. Both cognition and media exposure/attention are predictors of perception of the status of children's and teenagers' health and well-being. And finally, perception is associated with the accuracy of subjects' grade prediction.

Figure 1



Chaffee and Roser (1986), in a study of the efficacy of a health campaign, noted that involvement with an issue generally contributes to knowledge, attitudes and behaviors which led to variable attention to mediated messages. "In domains of high personal concern...the person should be more motivated to act in accordance with knowledge and internal values" (376). Chaffee and Roser were looking at how health knowledge and attitudes contributed to behavior regarding heart disease prevention. They found that "[p]erceiving onself at risk of heart disease is associated...with lower levels of K[nowledge]-A[ttitudes]-B[ehaviors] consistency" (395). They concluded that involvement was a contingent factor in knowledge, attitude and behavior consistency.

Media effects scholars commonly find that demographic characteristics contribute to how or what media are consumed (i.e. Valente & Saba, 1998; Loges & Ball-Rokeach, 1993). Health campaigns, like any marketing or awareness campaign, must take into consideration its intended audience.

Based on research literature about public health campaigns, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, whether children are in the household and income are expected to be predictors of cognitive work on the topic of children's health. Additionally, since the survey addressed subjects related to children throughout the state of Kansas, community involvement variables are expected to predict cognition. Variables such as number of years living in a community, whether the respondent is registered to vote, and whether he or she is employed are anticipated predictors of cognition. This leads to the first research question.

RQ1: How do demographics affect cognition regarding children's health?

Since demographics are expected to predict cognition, both demographics and cognition would be expected to be associated with media exposure and attention. Also, based on the work by Chaffee and Roser (1986), among others, we would anticipate that media use is associated with cognitive work related to health concerns.

Valente and Saba (1998) found that the mass media are efficient at creating awareness and knowledge in a public health campaign (109). In fact, they found that exposure to a mass media campaign in some instances even led to health-related behavior changes (115). The second research question follows logically from the first.

RQ2: How do cognition and demographics affect media exposure and attention?

Research question three examines the postulate that media use is negatively associated with perceptions of children's health concerns. Still we would expect, based on research by Valente and Saba (1998), that media also contribute to awareness and knowledge. Which leads to the third and fourth research questions.

RQ3: How do cognition and media exposure/attention contribute to perceptions of children's health concerns?

Given attitudinal and public opinion research, we would surmise that attention to and interest in the subject would lead to a more accurate assessment of children's health issues. We would also presume that greater media use is associated with greater thought given these issues. Media use is expected to be a negative predictor while cognition should be associated with a more accurate assessment of the "Report Card" grade.

RQ4: Does media exposure and attention, coupled with cognitive work on the topics in question, lead to more accurate "Report Card" estimates of children's and teenagers' health issues?

Data, Measures and Methods

Data

The data included in this study were generated in Fall 1998 by the Center for Advanced Social Research (CASR) at the University of Missouri-Columbia for Kansas Action for Children. The telephone survey generated 1,238 usable cases nearly evenly from four regions of Kansas –

Wichita (24.7%), Kansas City (24.5%), Topeka (25.8%), and Garden City (25%).

Variables

The dependent variables in this data consist of three constructed indices. The health perception index is an additive scale of 14 variables that relate to the respondent's perception of the status of children's and teenagers' health care issues. Six questions were reverse coded in order to keep positive and negative responses in the same direction. See Appendix A for listing of questions for each index. These 14 variables were found to form an internally consistent index (Cronbach's alpha .8630).

The health cognition index is theoretically related to the health perception index. It is an additive scale of 14 variables which relate to the amount of attention or thought the respondent has given the subject over the past year (see Appendix A). These 14 variables were found to form an internally consistent index (Cronbach's alpha .8572).

The report difference variable, the third dependent variable, was computed by subtracting the 1998 KAC "Report Card" grades from the grades given by survey respondents. The variables which make up the KAC variable consist of numeric values (B- = 2.5, C- = 3.5, D = 4) given to the "grades" assigned by the KAC Report Card Project ("Grading Procedure"). The report difference variable thereby represents the difference between the respondent-assigned grades and the actual KAC Report Card grades.

The independent variables include two indices. The first is a multiplicative pairing of television viewing habits (the sum of watching the 6 p.m and 10 p.m. local news) and reported attention to television news stories about children's and teenagers' health and well-being. The second is the multiplicative pairing of newspaper reading habits and reported attention to newspaper stories about children's and teenagers' health and well-being.

Other independent variables are: whether the respondent has children under 18 years of age in the house, age, employment status, years in community, registered to vote, race, level of education, income, and gender. Education, income, age and children are common health cognition variables (Valente & Saba, 1998). Employment status, years in the community and registered to vote were chosen based on assumptions about rootedness and involvement in a community (Chaffee & Roser, 1986). Gender and race were selected simply as intuitive controls.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The *average* respondent to the survey was a 61 year-old white man employed full-time with a household income of between $30,000 and $100,000 and no children under 18 years of age at home. He is registered to vote and has lived in his community for about 26 years. He has at least some college education and reads the local newspaper six to seven days a week, but has a nearly equal chance of never watching the local news and watching seven days a week.

While the above provides an "average" picture, it does not come close to telling the "whole" story. Among the 1,238 respondents, 63% were 50 years of age or under; 28% had an income between $50,000 and $100,000 and 61% were employed full-time. Eighty-five percent of respondents were white, 5% were African American. Fifty-seven percent were male and 85% were registered to vote. Twenty-six percent had lived in their community for five years or less; 34% had lived in their community for more than 25 years. Thirty percent had some undergraduate college education; 41% had a undergraduate or graduate degree. Fifty-nine percent had no children under the age of 18 living at home. Fifty-two percent of respondents read the local newspaper six to seven days a week; 25% never watched the local 6 p.m. television news and 20% never watched the local 10 p.m. news. Twenty-seven percent of respondents watched the local 6 p.m. television news seven days a week; 28% watched the local 10 p.m. news seven days a week (see Appendix B for demographic frequencies).

The variables in the health perception index consist of four possible responses (1 = increased, 2 = stayed the same, 3 = decreased, 8 = don't know/not sure). When combined in the index, high numbers refer to belief that the issue decreased whereas low numbers imply that the issue has increased (mean = 35.19, range = 16 to 112). Seventy-six percent of respondents had health index scores of between 16 and 39, meaning that a strong majority believes that the noted health care issues have increased. In short, they perceive that the situation in Kansas has worsened.

The same is true for the 14 variables in the health cognition index – the higher the number the less thinking the respondent reportedly has done regarding children's health issues; the lower the number, the more thought the respondent believes she has given the subject (mean = 29.54, range = 14 to 95). Fifty-five percent of respondents had cognition scores of 14 to 29, meaning the majority believes they have given children's health issues a fair bit of thought.

The final dependent variable, difference between reported and actual report card grades, has a mean of -2.146. The KAC report card total is 12.5. The lowest possible reported score is (4 variables x 1 = 4, score of 4 = straight A's); the highest possible reported score is (4 variables x 5 = 20, score of 20 = straight F's). The range in the difference index is -8.5 (straight A's (4) - actual grades (12.5)) to 7.5 (straight F's (20) - actual grades (12.5)). Therefore, the closer to 0, the more accurate the perceived score. Sixty-seven percent of respondents fall between -3.5 and -.5, which means that generally respondents believed grades were better than those assigned by KAC.

The key independent variables include the media measures and the aforementioned health perception and health cognition indices. The three media variables are: 1) exposure to television (from 0 to 7 days a week) combined multiplicatively with attention to children's health stories (from 0 for never heard stories like that to 4 for paid a lot of attention to such stories) in both newspapers and on local television news, 2) exposure to newspapers (from 0 to 7 days a week) combined multiplicatively with attention to stories in both media, and 3) the sum of exposure to television and newspapers multiplicatively combined with attention to the pertinent stories in both media. Both the television and newspaper exposure and attention variables have a possible range from 0 to 162. The mean for the television exposure and attention variable is 47.88; for the newspaper variable the mean is 29.22. The higher the number, the greater the exposure and attention. The television exposure variable will inevitably be greater since it sums exposure to both local 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. news, whereas there is no measure for reading of multiple newspapers.

The third media variable, which combines both exposure and attention in both media, has a potential range of 0 to 294, however the recorded range is narrower (0 to 224) with a mean of 85.74. Again, larger numbers mean more attention and more exposure.

Regression Results

For RQ1 (How do demographics affect cognition regarding children's health?), Table 1 shows that 8% of the variance in cognitive work on children's health issues is explained by demographics.

Because cognition is measured on a scale of thinking about the subject a lot = 1 to thinking about it hardly at all = 3, the higher the cognition score, the less the respondent has thought about the subject. In the full regression model (Model 2, Table 1) children in the household (β = 1.609), gender (β = -2.770), income (β = .549), age (β = .005), and reported voting registration (β = 1.532) are all significant predictors of cognition.

Because children in the household is coded 1 = Yes and 2 = No, having children under age 18 in the household is a greater indicator of cognition about issues of children's and teenagers' health and well-being, than is not having children in the household.

Gender is coded 1 = Male, 2 = Female. Because the beta is negative, being female is a greater predictor of thinking about children's and teenagers' health issues than is being male.

Income is scaled from 1 being the lowest income bracket to 7 being the highest bracket. Therefore the higher the income, the less likely you are to have thought about these issues. Likewise, because age is coded chronologically, the older you are the less likely you are to have thought about these issues. Finally, because 1 = Yes and 2 = No, reported voter registration is positively associated with thinking about children's health issues. If the respondent reports she is registered to vote, she is more likely to have thought about these issues.

In RQ2 (How do cognition and demographics affect media exposure and attention?), the media exposure and attention is being predicted. As previously noted, the media exposure and attention variables are such that small numbers indicate little and larger numbers indicate more exposure and attention.

Table 1

Demographics as predictors of Cognitive Work on issues of children's and teenagers' health and well-being

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant (Cognitive Work)	28.761***	27.153***
Children under 18 in household	1.970***	1.609***
Gender	-2.812***	-2.770***
Race	-.211	-.326
Income	.538***	.549***
Education	-.023	-.016
Age	.008***	.005*
Years in the community		.007
Registered to vote		1.532***
Employment status		.041
Adjusted R^2	.065	.080

* < .05, ** < .01, *** < .001

About 10% of the variance in media exposure and use is predicted by whether there are children in the household (β = 12.178), gender (β = 9.383), number of years in the community (β = .046), reported voter registration (β = -8.455), employment status (β = .794) and cognitive work (β = -.763).

In summary, respondents who have no children under the age of 18 in the household, who are female and older, who are not registered to vote, are unemployed and have given children's health issues almost no thought, are more likely to have been exposed to and paid attention to the media.

Table 2

Media exposure and attention as predicted by demographics and cognitive work

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant (Media exposure and attention)	62.905***	83.880***
Children under 18 in the household	11.412***	12.178***
Gender	11.158***	9.383***
Race	-.399	-1.018
Income	-.390	.038
Education	-.040	.047
Age	.010	.014
Years in the community	.040*	.046*
Registered to vote	-9.622***	-8.445***
Employment status	.802**	.794**
Cognitive work on health issues		-.763***
Adjusted R^2	.082	.103

* < .05, ** < .01, *** < .001

The third research question (How do cognition and media exposure/attention contribute to perceptions of children's health concerns?) asks what behaviors predict perception.

The perception variable, as measured here, defines low values as perception that conditions for children and teenagers are worsening. High values indicate the respondent is more optimistic in his or her perceptions about health conditions in Kansas.

In Table 3, newspaper exposure and attention provide no significant prediction regarding health perceptions. However, cognitive work on the issues (β = .722) and television exposure and attention ($\beta = .035$) do serve as significant predictors of health perceptions. Because low values on cognitive work indicate more thought on the issues and high values on perception indicate pessimism, the more one thinks about the issues the more pessimistic he or she is about the status of children and teenagers. In terms of media use, more television news exposure and attention is associated with a more optimistic view of Kansas health issues.

Table 3

Cognition and media exposure and attention as predictors of perceptions about health and well-being

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant (Perception of health issues)	12.400***	10.199***
Cognitive work on health issues	.755***	.722***
Television exposure and attention		.035**
Newspaper exposure and attention		-.005
Adjusted R^2	.216	.220

* < .05, ** < .01, *** < .001

The final research question (Does media exposure and attention, coupled with cognitive work on the topics in question, lead to more accurate "Report Card" estimates of children's and teenagers' health issues?) is significantly predicted only by cognitive work on the issues (Table 4).

Media exposure and attention provide no significant prediction for increased accuracy of report card estimate. The key value in the report card difference variable is zero. The closer to zero the value, the more accurate the grade, as outlined above in the variables section. Therefore, more cognitive work ($\beta = -.0304$), where 1 = more thought, is associated with more accurate estimates of the report card.

Table 4

Predictors of accuracy in assessment of Report Card grades

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant (Report Difference)	-2.360***	-1.412***
Television exposure and attention	.0002	-.0006
Newspaper exposure and attention	.0047	.0035
Cognitive work on health issues		-.0304***
Adjusted R^2	.000	.012

*** < .001

Model testing

Based on the findings, cognition is determined to be the most powerful of the predictors and demographics are determined to lead to cognitive work, supporting the model suggested in Figure 1.

Table 1 shows that 8% of the variance in cognitive work on issues of children's and teenagers' health and well-being is explained by demographic variables such as whether there are children in the household, whether the respondent is male or female, age of the respondent, income and interest in public issues (measured by reported registration to vote).

Table 2 shows that 10% of the variance in combined television and newspaper exposure and attention is predicted by demographic and cognitive attention.

Table 3 shows that 22% of the variance in perception of issues related children's and teenagers' health and well-being is predicted by cognitive work and media exposure and attention.

Therefore, cognition is strongly linked to perception, whereas media exposure and attention and demographic variables are less directly linked. In short, the data support the model and the premise that self-report of having thought about issues is associated with perception of issues. Furthermore, more cognitive work is linked to greater accuracy in perception of health issues as measured by the report card variable.

Discussion and Conclusion

The theme throughout this study is that cognitive work in connection with health concerns is the most significant predictor of health perceptions and "Report Card" accuracy. Media attention and television viewing were also significant predictors of health perceptions. These findings support the theoretical bases on which they are founded (Gerbner 1970; Chaffee & Roser 1986). Gerbner theorized that heavy television leads to cultivation of social attitudes. In the instance of this study, we saw that with increased television use, perceptions were that children's health concerns had decreased, which contradicts Morgan's (1984) findings of television use being associated with a "lousy" life (449).

Perhaps more importantly, as Chaffee and Roser noted, involvement in terms of cognition was a significant predictor of perception. Demographic variables such as having children under the age of 18 in the house served as a predictor of cognition. This supports the idea that involvement in the issue is associated with cognition or attention. It is not altogether clear why being female would be a greater predictor of cognition about children's health issues, unless one ascribes the difference to the role of mother as nurturer and primary care-giver.

Being older, as a predictor of giving less thought to issues of children's and teenagers' health and well-being, is logically linked to not having children in the household.

Explaining income as a predictor of cognitive work in this area is a bit more difficult. While, at least anecdotally, higher income is associated with higher education and more community involvement, in this analysis it was a negative predictor of giving thought to the issues of children's health and welfare. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that many of the variables in the cognition and perception indices were related to subjects like child poverty and Head Start programs which are low involvement issues for higher income households. A likely explanation for higher income being associated with less cognitive work is, simply put, that the issues are simply not in the realm of reality for these people. They have access to good child health care and are removed from issues such as low birth-weight babies.

Finally, reported voter registration is likely associated with greater cognitive work because it is related to greater concerns with public policy issues generally.

Demographic variables associated with higher exposure and attention to mass media might be explained by a sort of "Couch Potato Syndrome." Older people, with no children in the household, were more likely to have high exposure to mass media. So were unemployed and uninvolved people – those who are not registered to vote and have given little time to thinking about children's health issues.

This brings us full circle to the argument that involvement, as identified via demographic variables, leads to cognitive work on specific issues.

In sum, cognitive work on health concerns is an important predictor of more accurate health perceptions, and demographic profiles serve as important predictors of cognition on the issues.

Future Directions

A complementary future study might be content analyses of health issues as presented in Kansas media. This could provide some clues as to why television is a better predictor of perceptions than newspapers even though more people regularly read local newspapers than they watch local television news.

References

About Kansas Action for Children (Available at: http://www.kac.org/Default.htm), May 6, 1999.

Artwick, Claudette Guzan & Margaret T. Gordon (1998). Portrayal of U.S. cities by daily newspapers. Newspaper Research Journal, 19, (1), 54-63.

Brown, Jane D. & Kim Walsh-Childers (1994). Effects of media on personal and public health. In Jennings Bryant & Dolf Zillmann (Eds.), Media effects: Advances in theory and research, (389-415), Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Chaffee, Steven H. & Connie Roser (1986). Involvement and the consistency of knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Communication Research, 13, (3), 373-399.

Eveland, William P., Jr., & Jack M. McLeod (1995, May). The informational role of processing strategies for campaign news: Beyond simple exposure and attention. Paper presented at the meeting of the International Communication Association, Albuquerque, NM.

Fisher, June, Oscar H Gandy, Jr. & Noreen Z. Janus (1981). The role of popular media in defining sickness and health. In E. G. McAnany, J. Schnitman & N. Janus (Eds.), Communication and social structure: Critical studies in mass media research, (240-257). New York: Praeger Publishers.

Flay, Brian R. & Dee Burton (1990). Effective mass communication strategies for health campaigns. In C. Atkin & L Wallack (Eds.), Mass communication and public health: Complexities and conflicts (129-146). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Funkhouser, G. Ray (1973). The issues of the sixties: An exploratory study in the dynamics of public opinion. Public Opinion Quarterly, 37.

Gerbner, George (1970). Cultural Indicators: The case of violence in television drama. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 388, 69-81.

Gerbner, George & Larry Gross (1976). Living with television: The Violence Profile. Journal of Communication, 26, (2), 173-199.

Gerbner, George, Larry Gross, Michael F. Eleey, Marilyn Jackson-Beech, Suzanne Jeffries-Fox, and Nancy Signorielli (1977). TV Violence Profile No. 8: The highlights. Journal of Communication, 27, (2), 171-180.

Gerbner, George, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan and Nancy Signorielli (1980). The "Mainstreaming" of America: Violence Profile No. 11. Journal of Communication, 30, (3), 10-29.

Gerbner, George, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan & Nancy Signorielli (1982). Programming health portrayals: What viewers see, say and do. In D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet & J. Lazar (Eds.), Television and behavior: Ten years of scientific progress and implications for the 80's: Vol. 2. Technical Reviews (291-307). Rockville, MD: National Institute of Mental Health.

Graber, Doris A. (1980). Crime News and the Public. New York: Praeger.

Grading Procedures. (Available at: http://www.kac.org/ReportCard/grading.htm), October 30, 1999.

Heath, Linda (1984). Impact of newspaper crime reports on fear of crime: Multimethodological investigation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47, (2), 263-276.

Heath, Linda & Kevin Gilbert (1996). Mass media and fear of crime. American Behavioral Scientist, 39, (4), 379-386.

Kansas Kids Count DataBook, 1998. Topeka, KS: Kansas Action for Children, Inc.

Kosicki, Gerald M. & Jack M. McLeod (1990). Learning from political news: Effects of media images and information-processing strategies. In S. Kraus (Ed.), Mass communication & political information (69-83), Hillsdale, NJ. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Liska, Allen E. & William Baccaglini (1990). Feeling safe by comparison: Crime in the newspapers. Social Problems, 37, (3), 360-374.

Loges, William E. & Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach (1993). Dependency relations and newspaper readership. Journalism Quarterly, 70, (3), 602-614.

Milio, Nancy (1985). Health education = Health instruction + Health news: Media experiences in the United States, Finland, Australia, and England. In E. A. Rubinstein & J. D. Brown (Eds.), The media, social science and social policy for children (118-136). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp.

Morgan, Michael (1984). Heavy television viewing and perceived quality of life. Journalism Quarterly, 61, 499-504.

Smith, Susan J. (1984). Crime in the news. British Journal of Criminology, 24, (3), 289-295.

Valente, Thomas W. & Walter P. Saba (1998). Mass media and interpersonal influence in a reproductive health communication campaign in Bolivia. Communication Research, 25, (1), 96-124.

Wallack, Lawrence (1990). Mass media and health promotion: Promise, problem, and challenge. In C. Atkin & L Wallack (Eds.), Mass communication and public health: Complexities and conflicts (41-51). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Williams, Paul and Julie Dickinson (1993). Fear of crime: Read all about it?: The relationship between newspaper crime reporting and fear of crime. British Journal of Criminology, 33, (1), 33-56.

Appendix A

Health Perception Index

1. *Do you think the percent of Kansas children who get the immunizations or shots they need has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
2. Do you think the cases of child neglect in Kansas have increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
3. *Do you think the percent of Kansas children who have quality childcare has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
4. *Do you think the percent of Kansas mothers who get good care when they are pregnant has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
5. *Do you think the percent of needy Kansas children who get to participate in Head Start programs has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
6. Do you think the percent of Kansas children who are abused has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
7. Do you think the percent of Kansas newborns who die has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
8. Do you think the percent of Kansas babies who are born weighing too little has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
9. Do you think the percent of Kansas children who live in poverty has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
10. *Do you think the problem of violent deaths among teenagers in Kansas has improved, stayed the same, or got worse in the last year?
11. *Do you think the percent of youth who go on to further schooling after high school has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
12. Do you think the percent of teens who drink alcohol has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
13. Do you think the percent of teens who use illegal drugs has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?
14. Do you think the percent of single teens who have babies out of wedlock has increased, stayed the same, or decreased in the last year?

* Indicates variables that were reverse-coded

Health Attention Index

1. Would you say you have thought about the issue of immunizations a lot, some, or hardly at all?
2. Would you say you have thought about the issue of child neglect a lot, some, or hardly at all?
3. Would you say you have thought about this issue (childcare) a lot, some, or hardly at all?
4. Would you say you have thought about the issue of prenatal care a lot, some, or hardly at all?
5. Would you say you have thought about this issue (Head Start programs) a lot, some, or hardly at all?
6. Would you say you have thought about the issue of child abuse a lot, some, or hardly at all?
7. Would you say you have thought about infant mortality a lot, some, or hardly at all?
8. Would you say you have thought about the issue of low birth weight babies a lot, some, or hardly at all?
9. Would you say you have thought about this issue (child poverty) a lot, some, or hardly at all?
10. Would you say you have thought about this issue (violent teenage deaths) a lot, some, or hardly at all?
11. Would you say you have thought about the issue (post high school education) a lot, some, or hardly at all?
12. Would you say you have thought about the issue of teenage drinking a lot, some, or hardly at all?
13. Would you say you have thought about the issue of teen illegal drug use a lot, some, or hardly at all?
14. Would you say you have thought about this issue (single teenage mothers) a lot, some, or hardly at all?

Appendix B

Demographic frequencies

Age	Frequency	Percent
19 to 35	317	25.6
36 to 50	457	36.9
51 to 70	316	25.5
71 and older	130	10.5
No answer	18	1.5
Total	1238	100

Income	Frequency	Percent
< $20k	157	12.7
$20k but < $50k	514	41.5
$50k but < $100k	340	27.5
> $100k	123	9.9
No answer	104	8.4
Total	1238	100

Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Employed Full-time	750	60.6
Employed Part-time	65	5.3
Self-employed	123	9.9
Unemployed	25	2
Retired	200	16.2
Student	22	1.8
Homemaker	36	2.9
Other	17	1.3
Total	1238	100

Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
White	1055	85.2
Latino/Hispanic	51	4.1
African American	64	5.2
Asian American	14	1.1
American Indian	13	1.1
Other	32	2.6
Refused	9	0.7
Total	1238	100

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	701	56.6
Female	537	43.4
Total	1238	100

Registered to Vote	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1049	84.7
No	182	14.7
Other	7	0.6
Total	1238	100

Years in Community	Frequency	Percent
5 years of less	316	25.5
6 to 15 years	318	25.7
16 to 25 years	179	14.3
26 to 40 years	234	19
41 to 60 years	142	11.5
61 and older	42	3.5
Other	7	0.5
Total	1238	100

Education	Frequency	Percent
No high school diploma	121	9.8
High school grad/GED	233	18.8
Some college/no degree	298	24.1
2-year degree	76	6.1
Undergraduate degree	298	24.1
Graduate degree or more	208	16.8
Other	4	0.3
Total	1238	100

Children under 18 in household	Frequency	Percent
Yes	503	40.6
No	733	59.2
Other	2	0.2
Total	1238	100

Newspaper reading	Frequency	Percent
Never	124	10
1 day a week	138	11.1
2 days a week	117	9.5
3	115	9.3
4	54	4.4
5	49	4
6	98	7.9
7	541	43.7
Other	2	0.1
Total	1238	100

	6 p.m.		10 p.m.	
Local Television News Watching	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never	314	25.4	248	20
1 day a week	71	5.7	77	6.2
2 days a week	100	8.1	111	9
3	134	10.8	134	10.8
4	90	7.3	95	7.7
5	125	10.1	149	12
6	62	5	79	6.4
7	339	27.4	342	27.6
Other	3	0.2	3	0.3
Total	1238	100	1238	100

THE EFFECTS OF NEWS STORIES THAT PUT CRIME AND VIOLENCE INTO CONTEXT:

Testing the Public Health Model of Reporting

By

Renita Coleman, Ph.D. Student
and
Prof. Esther Thorson, Ph.D.

University of Missouri
School of Journalism

Address Inquiries to:
Renita Coleman
3500 County Road 255
Fulton, MO 65251

573-642-6765
e-mail: renitacol@excite.com

Submitted for consideration by the Mass Communication and Society Division, for the annual AEJMC conference, Phoenix, AZ, Aug. 9-12, 2000

THE EFFECTS OF NEWS STORIES THAT PUT CRIME AND VIOLENCE INTO CONTEXT:

Testing the Public Health Model of Reporting

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine whether changing the way newspaper stories report crime and violence can induce shifts in readers' perceptions of the problem . With an experiment that manipulates the framing and graphic presentation of newspaper stories on crime and violence, the study seeks to discover whether the public health model that calls for news stories to incorporate information on context, risk factors, and prevention strategies will contribute to readers' learning more about the context in which crime and violence occurs, endorsing prevention strategies in addition to punishment, and being more attuned to societal risk factors and causes of crime and violence.

THE EFFECTS OF NEWS STORIES THAT PUT CRIME AND VIOLENCE INTO CONTEXT:

Testing the Public Health Model of Reporting

INTRODUCTION

In the riots that resulted from the verdict in the Rodney King beating trial, approximately 200 of the 728 bars and liquor stores in South Central Los Angeles were destroyed. Residents had long complained that alcohol outlets were magnets for crime and violence, so they formed a coalition to fight the rebuilding of the liquor stores in their community. South Central had more alcohol outlets than 13 states, one study showed. A study by the University of Southern California School of Medicine showed an additional 25 violent crimes occurred for each 10 percent increase in liquor stores in that area (Stevens, 1997).

The citizen's coalition turned to the media and succeeded in shifting the focus on crime and violence in their area from conflicts between blacks and Koreans to the overabundance of liquor stores. Once the local media reported this information, officials began taking action to reduce the number of alcohol outlets. (Stevens, 1994).

The approach the South Central citizens took, of looking for the social causes of crime and violence, and treating crime and violence as preventable is catching on. In the vanguard are public health officials and epidemiologists pushing for a change in how Americans think about violent crime. Violence should be considered in the same category as other deadly epidemics such as lung cancer and heart disease, they say. Violence has definable risk factors, and most importantly, it is not inevitable; crime and violence *can* be prevented. Today, there is a rapid increase in violence research and prevention programs, but there is little chance of the success of such programs unless the way people think about violence is also changed. That involves a change in the way media cover crime and violence, from reporting that attributes responsibility for violence to individuals to coverage that also addresses underlying societal causes and gives crime a context that helps citizens understand where it comes from and what kinds of things can reduce it.

Epidemiologists are using the same scientific approaches to fighting crime and violence as they did to reduce other public health problems – defining its risk factors and developing prevention strategies. Yet, almost all media coverage of crime and violence centers on what individuals can do to help themselves; little if any reporting points out social changes that can help prevent violent crime.

The purpose of this study is to examine whether changing the way newspaper stories report crime and violence can induce shifts in readers' perceptions of the problem . With an experiment that manipulates the framing and graphic presentation of newspaper stories on crime and violence, the study seeks to discover whether the public health model that calls for news stories to incorporate information on context, risk factors, and prevention strategies will contribute to readers' learning more about the context in which crime and violence occurs, endorsing prevention strategies in addition to punishment, and being more attuned to societal risk factors and causes of crime and violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The public health model is defined as an approach that sees the causes of death and injury as preventable rather than inevitable. By studying the interaction among the victims, the agent, and the environment, the public health approach seeks to define risk factors, then develop and evaluate methods to prevent problems that threaten public health. The goal of the model is to alter the basic conditions in society that give rise to and sustain such problems (Stevens, 1997). Although it may seem unusual to put crime and violence in the same category as heart disease or AIDS, public health officials point out that as the leading cause of death in this country, violence can and should be approached in the same way as any other deadly social disease. By categorizing violence with other public health problems and applying the same scientific tools used to control other epidemics, public health proponents believe they can convince Americans that violence is predictable and preventable. They see their task as no different from the one public health experts faced in the 1960s when they advised that adding safety features to cars, wearing seat belts, and not drinking and driving would reduce automobile deaths and injuries. Until the 1960s, traffic accidents were blamed on "the nut behind the wheel" (Stevens, 1997, p. 11). Prevention strategies were limited to advising people to drive more safely. When researchers began identifying the role of societal and environmental risk factors in auto crashes, the media changed their reporting. They began including the type of cars involved, road and weather conditions, and whether people were driving drunk or wearing seatbelts. Soon, perceptions of the causes of auto injuries and deaths changed, and more social policies were enacted to discourage drunk driving, build safer roads, and force car manufacturers to design safety features into cars. The rate of automobile deaths and injuries slowed.

Crime and violence are not so different, epidemiologists say. Some of the risk factors associated with high levels of many kinds of violence include poverty, racial segregation and discrimination, unemployment, alcohol, firearms, the portrayal of violence in the media, lack of education, child abuse, childhood exposure to violence, and the belief in male dominance (Stevens, 1997, p. 13).

Now that epidemiologists have identified these societal risk factors, the media can change its reporting to include context that puts the problem in perspective, information about identified risk factors, and consequences to individuals and society.

However, research shows that the media do not routinely include public health information in their reports. Most studies, which typically examine reporting on more conventional health problems such as illness and disease rather than crime and violence, show infrequent information of the contextual kind called for by the public health model. Milio argues that the media present "an almost universally typical message emphasizing personal responsibility for health problems and, if noted, short-term causes and consequences . . . where prevention is espoused, it is put forward . . . as what individuals can do for themselves" (Milio, 1985, p. 119). A review of *The New York Times Information Bank* confirmed this repeated message of individual responsibility in the national print media (Levin, 1979). A content analysis of three popular, mass circulation magazines between 1959 and 1974 also revealed consistency in the treatment of heart disease as attributable to individuals (Fisher, Gandy & Janus, 1981). That study found that less than 12 percent of the items mentioned any link between government action and treatment or prevention of heart disease. "All (three magazines) are consistent in their adoption of victim-blaming models of causality and treatment," the study concluded (Fisher, Gandy & Janus, 1981, p. 256). Another study of newspaper coverage of cancer found that news stories did not provide statistics on cancer incidence rates, and exhibited a lack of detailed information that would provide perspective (Freimuth, Greenberg, DeWitt & Romano, 1984).

When coverage of crime and violence is specifically studied, the results are generally the same. One content analysis of violence reporting showed that out of 1,791 TV news stories in California, only one story had an explicit public health frame (Dorfman, 1997). When prevention was discussed at all, it was usually in the form of advice on personal safety. Larger societal factors were rarely mentioned. A study on youth violence in 1993 by the Berkeley Media Studies group found that few stories included information about precursors or prevention strategies (Stevens, 1997). Numerous content analyses consistently show that crime is over reported in proportion to its occurrence (see Combs & Slovic, 1979, for a summary).

These media portrayals of crime and violence that rarely include risk factors or prevention strategies persist despite calls for more such reporting within the journalism industry (Stepp, 1988; Astor, 1994; Kirkhorn, 1996) and research that shows that when risk factors and causal information on crime is included, readers are less fearful, especially in regard to local crimes (Heath, 1984). This is significant because media reports on crime and violence can have effects on readers' perceptions. "Newspapers mould their readers' opinions rather than reflect them, or at least they influence readers' opinions under certain conditions" (Davis, 1952, p. 325). Many studies have found that individuals exposed to extensive crime news are more fearful than those not exposed to large quantities of crime news (Einsiedel, Salomone & Schneider, 1984; Graber, 1980; Jaehnig, Weaver & Fico, 1981; Gebotys, 1988; Gordon & Heath, 1981; Heath, 1984; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990; Smith, 1984; Williams & Dickinson, 1993; Jacob, 1984).

Iyengar (1991) found that TV news stories on crime framed a certain way led people to attribute responsibility to individuals, and that crime stories framed differently led people to attribute responsibility more to societal causes. His definition of "thematic" coverage has many commonalities with the type of reporting advocated by the public health model. Thematic coverage was associated with increased societal attributions while episodic coverage – the kind employed by most news stories – was related to increased attributions of individualistic causal responsibility as well as punitive treatment. Regarding crime coverage specifically, Iyengar found that episodic reporting was the rule (Iyengar, 1991).

Episodic and thematic reporting form the overarching framework for the concepts of base rate information and exemplars . Episodic reporting is made up primarily of exemplars, while thematic reporting includes much more base rate information. Exemplars are defined as case studies about individuals whose circumstances illustrate the phenomenon in question, involve only limited individual cases, and are chosen mainly for their entertaining qualities rather than the accuracy of their representation of the topic in the report. Base rate information, however, gives details of the number or proportion of people or things involved in a given social issue (Gibson & Zillmann, 1998; Gibson & Zillmann, 1994; Brosius & Bathelt, 1994). Base rate information is necessary to give a thematic frame to an issue; exemplars are the hallmark of episodic reporting. The news media continue to rely on the more sensational and less reliable exemplars than the base rate information the public health model advocates for adding valuable context to reports on crime. Research shows that people tend to rely on exemplars when they form perceptions and judgments

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

about the social issues presented. Despite its greater validity and generalizability, base rate information does not exert a strong effect on the audiences' perceptions or judgments . In fact, people tend to ignore base rate information when even flimsy specific evidence in the form of exemplars is present (Kahneman & Tversky, 1973).

If public perceptions of crime are formed partly on the basis of media information (Stroman & Seltzer, 1985), then, over time, media messages that emphasize certain information about crime and violence create a framework for thinking about solutions that favors certain kinds of social change over others (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1991; Leps, 1992; Scheingold, 1991; van Dijk, 1993). "There is evidence that people's perceptions of risk are subject to large and systematic biases. These misconceptions undoubtedly influence the way that people think about and respond to hazards in their personal lives. Such biases may misdirect the actions of public interest groups and government agencies, resulting in less than optimal control of risk" (Combs & Slovic, 1978, 837-838). Thus it is important to learn whether changing the way the media report on crime and violence to a public health model can actually change people's perceptions . If it is indeed the case that a public health approach to news stories can bring about positive attitude change, then the media may play an important role in altering the conditions in society that give rise to crime and violence .

Journalistic conventions

Altering the way journalists cover crime and violence may be no easy task. The conventions used to structure news stories have gained acceptance from journalists and their audiences (Graber, 1984). While journalists' routines are accepted as appropriate practice, they are not ideologically neutral. A common criticism of the news media is that they perpetuate the hegemonic view of individuals over the collective (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Grabe, 1996; Iyengar, 1991) Some have suggested that journalists risk failure by offering a new point of view that challenges long-held ideas (Milio, 1985). That failure is compounded by a focus that shifts away from the individual and onto the broader environment (Wallack, 1990). An emphasis on collective solutions runs counter to Western society's basic liberal values as well as to journalists' conventions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding what is involved in the task of changing the way journalists report crime and violence necessitates some knowledge of schema theory, frame analysis or framing theory, and attribution theory. Another relevant theoretical perspective is the role of the media in agenda setting.

Schema theory is the more overarching framework under which framing theory and attribution theory can be understood. Schemas are the knowledge structures that organize people's memories (Harris, 1994). Schema theory basically says that people do not literally store and retrieve information they get from the media, but modify it in terms of their pre-existing beliefs. The new content of media messages is comprehended through interactions with the knowledge people already have (Rubin, 1986; Brewer & Nakamura, 1984; Rumelhart, 1980; Thorndyke, 1984; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). People incorporate the new information within their previously formed schemas and draw inferences (Harris, 1994).

How people's schemas can be manipulated by the messages they receive is the subject of frame analysis. This theory says that people monitor their social environment for cues that signal when they should change their existing preconceptions or schema (Goffman, 1974). Events are "framed" or given a field of meaning within which they can be understood (Severin & Tankard, 1992). This theory implies that cues learned from the media can also be used to make sense of our experiences and social situation (Baran & Davis, 1995). Framing essentially involves selection and salience. The frames that the media use in stories help define problems and call attention to some things while obscuring others (Entman, 1993). What is left out also contributes to the power of frames. The idea of framing also implies that the frame has a common effect on a large portion of the audience

(Entman, 1993). At the most general level, framing refers to subtle alterations in statement or presentation.

According to Entman (1993), frames have at least four functions: to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies.

Framing can be viewed under the rubric of agenda setting, which is quintessentially described as the idea that the media do not tell people what to think, but what to think about (Cohen, 1963). This theory basically says that one of the effects of mass communication is to direct people's attention to certain problems or issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Agenda-setting concerns a more macro level of influence than framing theory – whereas agenda-setting deals with the subjects or topics of media messages, framing can be thought of as the focus or angle within those subjects.

Attribution theory relates to framing because how a message is framed can have an effect on how people attribute responsibility or place blame. Attribution theory says that people typically exaggerate the role of individuals' motives and intentions while downplaying the role of contextual or societal factors. Psychologists have termed this the fundamental attribution error (Jones, 1979). Research has shown that certain kinds of news frames tend to encourage this fundamental attribution error of placing responsibility with individuals, while other kinds of news frames are associated with a tendency to attribute responsibility more to societal factors than to individuals. Iyengar's (1991) studies of news frames and attribution of responsibility documents this connection. He showed that news stories typically used either episodic frames or thematic frames. The episodic frames depicted concrete events that illustrated issues, while thematic frames put issues in a more general context. He found that episodic framing, which is the more common kind of news frame, leads to individual attributions of responsibility. The more rare thematic frame was more likely to result in societal attributions. Attribution of responsibility is critical to social change; who citizens hold accountable for social problems can determine the kinds of solutions they choose. Iyengar argues that the media's "unswerving focus on specific episodes, individual perpetrators, victims, or other actors at the expense of more general, thematic information inhibits the attribution of political responsibility to societal factors" (Iyengar, 1991, p. 5). His studies found that "following exposure to episodic framing, Americans describe chronic problems such as poverty and crime not in terms of deep-seated social or economic conditions, but as mere idiosyncratic outcomes." However, when news coverage "presents a more general or analytic frame of reference . . . the public's reasoning about causal and treatment responsibility shifts accordingly" (Iyengar, 1991, p. 137).

Crime was one of the specific issues of Iyengar's studies. A content analysis of the TV news stories in his study found that crime was framed almost exclusively in episodic terms – 89 percent of all news stories. In addition, the stories tended to focus on violent crime (Iyengar, 1991). His results showed that episodic versus thematic coverage yielded only weak results for crime. While the episodic frame did increase attributions of individual responsibility, the effects showed strong interactions with the subject matter. For instance, episodic framing of white crime elicited higher levels of individual responsibility than the thematic framing, but these same effects were absent for stories dealing with black crime and illegal drugs. He concludes, however, that "it is remarkable that relatively modest amounts of exposure to news about illegal drugs, white or black crime . . . proved sufficient to induce significant shifts in viewers' attributions" (Iyengar, 1991, p. 45). His results also showed systematic differences in attribution of responsibility were related to political ideology and party affiliation. Differences between Democrats and Republicans consistently exceeded differences between societal and individualistic attributors when it came to issues of crime, terrorism, and racial inequality (Iyengar 1991, p. 107).

The interaction of race and crime was the focus of research by Peffley and colleagues (1996). In their experiment, white participants who endorsed negative stereotypes of African Americans viewed black suspects in television crime stories as deserving of more punitive treatment than similarly portrayed white suspects. Even when confounding variables such as gender, age, party identification, and ideology were controlled for, individuals who held negative racial stereotypes had more punitive attitudes toward crime.

In our first study, we coded respondents into three broad categories of World Views. They are: Fatalism, following Rotter's construct (Rotter, 1954; Rotter, Chance & Phares, 1972), Just World, using Lerner's definition (Lerner, 1970, Lerner & Matthews, 1967; Lerner & Simmons, 1966), and Comprehensibility (Silk, 1995). Fatalism was defined as viewing things as random, with no logical cause or reason. Those with fatalistic views of the world see social change as impossible, so any attempts to better the world are futile. The Just World point of view was defined as seeing society as fair and the status quo as desirable. People with this point of view believe conformity to rules and authority is important, and punishment is appropriate. "People get what they deserve," is atypical comment. The concept of comprehensibility was adapted from Silk's (1995) discussion of how the press concerns itself with explaining eccentric beliefs and "thereby rendering them comprehensible and acceptable to readers." For this study, comprehensibility was defined as seeing the world as structured, predictable, and explicable. People with this world view want information and are confident they can make sense out of that information.

Effects of graphic presentation on readers

Also of importance to this study of newspaper stories on crime and violence is the effect of presentation . Previous research has shown that reader knowledge nearly doubled over that of the control group when both text and graphics were used to report the same story and that background boxes containing text aided reader understanding (Griffin & Stevenson, 1992). Other research has shown the superior effectiveness of sidebar stories (Ward, 1992) and pullout quotes (Wanta & Remy, 1995; Wanta & Gao, 1994) on recall of information. Research on pullout quotes is scant. Other than Wanta and colleagues' studies, (Wanta & Gao,1994; Wanta & Remy, 1995), the closest approximation of the effects of pullquotes are studies on the use of direct quotations versus paraphrasing in the *text*. Weaver et al. (1974) found no difference between readers of stories with direct quotes versus readers of stories with paraphrases on comprehension, retention, accuracy, believability, and other categories.

For this experiment, it was decided not to use charts and infographics because of the mixed results of their effectiveness in helping readers understand and remember information. Some research has found that infographics aid comprehension and recall (Stark & Hollander, 1990; Ward, 1992) while other research has found the opposite (Vernon, 1951; Vernon, 1946; Roller, 1980).

Based on the literature, we tested the following hypotheses:

H1a: Since the public health model of reporting gives readers more contextual and base-rate information, readers in the public health groups would learn more than readers of the traditional stories in the control group.

H1b: Readers of public health stories presented in graphic format would learn more than readers of public health stories presented in text format.

H2a: Because base rate information was offered along with exemplars in the public health stories, readers would find the public health stories more interesting, relevant, believable, important, and informative than the traditional stories.

H2b: Readers of public health stories presented in graphic format would find the stories more interesting, relevant, believable, important, and informative than readers of the public health stories presented in text format.

H3: Since the public health stories framed crime and violence as being preventable and offer suggestions for prevention, readers of the public health stories would support prevention more than readers of the traditional stories.

H4: Stories framed according to the public health model would lead readers in the public health groups to be more opposed to punishment approaches than readers in the control group.

H5: Since the public health model of reporting frames stories thematically rather than episodically, readers of the public health stories would make more attributions of responsibility to society rather than individuals.

H6: Stories framed according to the public health model would lead readers to agree more strongly that the stories illustrated the consequences of crime.

METHODOLOGY

Study 1

In an exploratory study, 89 graduate and undergraduate students attending a Midwestern university participated in a thought-listing protocol . Thought listing is a projective test of cognitive processing that is the principle means for gathering observations of the knowledge activated by people during message processing (Shapiro 1994). So as not to interfere with reading itself, the procedure used a nondirective probe soliciting reports immediately after reading was completed.

The participants were assigned randomly to one of two treatment conditions or a control group. There were approximately 30 participants in each group and equal numbers of female and male participants. Each group was exposed to one of three versions of newspaper stories about crime and violence. One treatment condition incorporated contextual and statistical information about the type of crime portrayed in the story according to the public health model of reporting. It was presented as text only. The second treatment condition also incorporated the public health information, but presented it in a graphic format – a boxed sidebar with a 30% gray screen. The third condition was the control group, with the story written in traditional newspaper style, containing no public health information, and presented as text only.

The four stories were "breaking news" stories on the subjects of domestic violence, youth violence, alcohol-related assault, and handgun-related homicide. The stories were approximately the same lengths and contained all the same information except for the public health material; in the control condition, additional, non-essential information about the perpetrator, victim, or the victim's family, and quotations or comments from family, friends, or officials was included in order to make the stories the same length. Stories were presented as "clips' – individual articles that had been clipped out of a newspaper – rather than imbedded in an entire newspaper page along with stories not of interest to the research.

After exposure to the stories, participants were asked to complete a thought-listing exercise that asked participants to "Please write down all thoughts and feelings you had while reading this article, including thoughts and feelings that are not necessarily relevant to the article." Trained coders categorized the thoughts into areas of World View (Just World, Fatalism, and Comprehensibility, broken into Causes, Consequences , Prevention, and Generalizations, Attribution of Responsibility (Individual or Societal), Believability, and Journalistic Criticism. Approximately 10% of the protocols were randomly chosen for reliability analysis. Scott's Pi was calculated for the categories and ranged from .714 to 1.0 for all but one category, Attribution of Responsibility. For that category, Scott's Pi = .6. However, only 5 thoughts about responsibility were recorded on the protocols selected for reliability analysis; disagreement on even one drove the numbers down to .6.[1] The thoughts were also coded for valence (positive, negative, neutral).

The second part of the questionnaire contained asked about subjects' liking for the story, how interesting the story was, relevance to their lives, credibility, importance, and fearfulness measured on a seven-point Likert scale. Other questions measured factual recall and media use with multiple choice answers, and attribution of responsibility measured on 7-point Likert scales.

The one-way ANOVA in SPSS was used to create analysis of variance tests.

The independent variables of interest were the public health text-only stories, the public health-graphics stories, and the control condition of traditional stories in text-only.

The dependent variables of interest for the thought-listing section were the number of thoughts in each coding category; for the questionnaire, the dependent variables were the responses to the Likert and multiple-choice items.

As a manipulation check to confirm subjects' perceptions of public health-type information in the stimuli, we coded the number of comments made about the public health information such as contextual background and statistical information that was in the two public health conditions only. Respondents in the control condition made no comments about the public health information, while readers in the public health-text condition made an average of .24 comments and readers in the public health-graphic condition made an average of .27 comments. Post hoc tests in one-way ANOVA indicated highly significant differences between the two public health groups and the control group (p = .0002), thus we felt confident in the strength of our manipulation.

Results of Study 1

In the thought-listing protocols, there were significant differences between the control group and the public health groups on several measures. Readers in the control group had significantly more thoughts about attribution of responsibility than did readers in the public health conditions. This held for both societal and individual attributions of responsibility. (Insert Table 1 About Here). Planned post-hoc tests using Scheffe's method showed that when it came to thoughts about society's role in crime and violence, participants who read the traditional news story had significantly more thoughts about society's responsibility for problems than did the readers of the public health stories in the text-only version (F = 3.5, d.f. = 2, 325, p = .03). While this finding may at first glance seem counter to the hypothesis, it can better be understood in the context of the valence of those thoughts; the control group participants had almost no negative thought about society's responsibility, while the public health-graphic condition readers had the most negative thoughts about society's role in the problems of crime and violence (Means: Control - .00, Public Health-Graphic - .037). Although the difference in negative thoughts was not significant, it was marginally so (F = 2.7, d.f. = 2, 325, p = .068. The control group readers also expressed significantly more neutral thoughts about society's responsibility than either the public health-text or public health-graphics readers (F = 5.74, d.f. = 2, 325, p = .004).

When viewed in this context, our finding is consistent with the hypothesis that public health information can have an effect on audiences' attributions of responsibility.

From these data, the inclusion of public health information in crime and violence news stories appears to help shift people's attitudes so they become more critical of society's role in crime and violence. When readers of traditionally written stories think about society's role in the problems of crime and violence, they are simply expressing neutral statements such as "Someone should realize bad things can happen in a crowd" or "We owe it to his children to find out what happened." They are not as critical as readers of stories that include public health information. Readers of public health stories are more likely to lay responsibility at the feet of society. Typical responses included "Why did his company allow him to work there after being suspended so many times?" or "It's society that permits these murderers to go free." (Note: There were no positive thoughts about society's responsibility for crime and violence).

Consistent with the finding that public health stories encourage criticism of society for crime and violence, is that the public health approach decreases attribution of responsibility toward individuals. Readers of the traditionally written crime stories had significantly more thoughts about individual responsibility than readers of public health-text only stories or readers of public health-graphics stories (F = 7.59, d.f. = 2, 325, p = .0006). The valence of those thoughts was also as predicted; the control group had more negative thoughts and more neutral thoughts about individuals' responsibility. Sample responses include: "Not only was he inconsiderate of his own family when he decided to kill those two men, but he simply doesn't see others' lives as important as he should," "What the heck was she (attacker's girlfriend) doing during all of this?" I thought that the two men could have defended themselves," "I don't understand why the other guys didn't fight back," or "Even if he is drunk, why would he hit someone he didn't know?" (Note: There were no positive thoughts about individual responsibility).

When examining our world-view categories, readers of the traditional news stories were significantly more pessimistic than either public health condition using planned post-hoc Scheffe tests (F = 6.56, d.f. = 2, 325, p = .0016). (Insert Table 2 About Here).

Pessimism, measured as Fatalism, was defined as viewing things as random, with no logical cause or reason, following Rotter's construct (1954, Rotter, Chance & Phares 1972). Those with fatalistic views of the world see social change as impossible, so any attempts to better the world are futile. Comments coded as Fatalism were typically, "The world is getting more dangerous," "This just came out of the blue," and "There's nothing anyone could have done to prevent this." That readers of the traditional stories were significantly more likely to agree with the fatalistic statements than were readers of either type of public health story reinforces the criticism of status-quo journalism as contributing to an apathetic citizenry.

The categories of Just World and Comprehensibility world views showed no significant differences between groups (Just World F = .0077, d.f. = 2, 325, p = .992; Comprehensibility F = 1.23, d.f. = 2, 325, p = .293). People with the Just World point of view (Lerner, 1970; Lerner & Matthews, 1967; Lerner & Simmons, 1966) typically see society as fair and the status quo as desirable. They believe conformity to rules and authority is important, and punishment is appropriate. "People get what they deserve," is atypical comment. The concept of comprehensibility was defined as seeing the world as structured, predictable, and explicable. People with this world view want information and are confident they can make sense out of that information. The Comprehensibility world view category was also coded according to number of statements about causes, consequences, prevention, generalizations from individual events to larger things, and comments about needing more information to figure things out. The only subcategory that showed significant differences between groups was Generalizations. In this category, the public health-graphics condition showed significantly more generalization comments than either the control group or the public health-text group. This was consistent with the public health model predictions since to make generalizations is akin to putting events in context.

Counter to our predictions about public health information, there were no significant differences between groups on number of thoughts about prevention, consequences or causes (Prevention $F = .927$, d.f. = 2, 325, $p = .397$; Consequences $F = 2.83$, d.f. = 2, 325, $p = .061$; Causes $F = 1.88$, d.f. = 2, 325, $p = .154$). We surmised that, while people may have had thoughts about the public health information they had just read, they may not have been strong enough with this one-time manipulation to change attitudes. Attitudes toward prevention, consequences, and causes may be like attitudes toward products as a result of advertising – the effects become apparent only after long-term, multiple exposures. Our one-time manipulation may not have been strong enough to influence attitudes developed over years of exposure to media messages emphasizing individual responsibility framed episodically. We intend to study the longitudinal effects of public health model reporting in future studies.

However, we were encouraged by the lack of significant differences between groups regarding the number of comments about believability, clarity of the stories, the way they were written or reported, and the journalistic conventions such as naming victims, giving addresses, or the appearance of objectivity and bias. Even though the addition of public health information such as statistics and background information on crimes in general is out of the ordinary, it apparently did not make readers think the stories were more biased or unfair than traditionally written stories.

Study 2

Encouraged by the results of the thought-listing protocol, we next tested the public health model of reporting using a 3 x 3 factorial design. In this between-subjects experiment, 127 students at a large Midwestern university were randomly assigned to one of two treatment conditions or a control group. Again, there were approximately the same number of male and female participants. Individual group sizes ranged from 40 to 45. Each group was exposed to one of three versions of a mock newspaper containing stories about crime and violence. Two public health conditions incorporated contextual and statistical information about the type of crime portrayed in the story according to the public health model of reporting. One public health condition was presented as text only. The other public health condition also incorporated the public health information, but presented it in a graphic format – a boxed sidebar and a text-based chart. The third condition was the control group, with the story written in traditional newspaper style, containing no public health information, and presented as text only.

This time, three breaking news stories were presented incorporated into mock pages of an actual newspaper in order to more closely simulate the way readers actually read news stories in the natural environment. To control for order effects, a Latin Square design was used. Each of the three stories was presented on the front page, the local front, and an inside jump page for 27 different versions with participants randomly assigned to the versions.

The stories were about youth violence, alcohol-related rape, and handgun-related homicide. In the youth violence story, a 17-year-old boy was shot in the leg when four other youths broke up an after-school basketball game with gunfire. Police arrested a suspect and speculated that the shooting was the result of an argument between youths from rival schools over girls and money. In the alcohol-related rape story, an 18-year-old woman reported being assaulted at a fraternity house party where alcohol was being served. In the homicide story, a 43-year-old university employee was shot in the chest and killed early one morning at a car wash. His wallet was missing and police suspect the motive was robbery. All three stories were based on actual events in the community of the study at least a year earlier. These stories were chosen for their potential interest and relevance to the study participants – young college students. In addition, two of the three were representative of typical crimes of that nature, i.e.: victims are more likely to know their assailants, sexual assaults are more likely to occur when the assailant and/or victim have been drinking, etc. Only the murder story was atypical in that the victim was killed by strangers.

Again, we made the stories approximately the same length; additional, non-essential information about the perpetrator, victim, or the victim's family, and quotations or comments from family, friends, or officials was included in the control condition in order to adjust for the added material in the public health stories. As in the first study, all stories were written to eliminate any mention of race; names were changed to be ethnically ambiguous, and locations were fictitious to avoid any racial inferences.

After exposure, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that measured knowledge of details in the stories using multiple choice answers, and how interesting, relevant, believable, important and informative the stories were on 7-point Likert scales. Respondents were also asked "What race would you say the people in this story were" and were given choices of black, white, Hispanic, Asian, other and not sure for both assailant and victim of each story. Attitudes toward prevention and punishment, and attribution of responsibility for crime and violence were measured on 4-point Likert scales with no neutral point. Other questions collected data on media use, attention to crime in the media, political party identification, liberal-to-conservative ideology, and the usual demographics.

Results of Study 2

Hypotheses 1a & 1b

To test knowledge, participants were asked to answer six factual questions for each story. The answers to the first two questions were given in all story conditions. The answers to the third and fourth questions were given only to readers of the public health stories, and were presented in the text in both conditions. The answers to the fifth and sixth questions were also given only to readers of the public health stories, but were presented in the text in the public health-text condition, and in the graphics in the public health-graphic condition. Because participants in the control group, who did not have the answers to questions 3 through 6, sometimes guessed the correct answer, the scores for questions 3 through 6 were adjusted by subtracting the guess rate of the control group.

One-way ANOVAs showed no significant differences between the three groups on knowledge questions 1 and 2, as expected . However, there were significant differences on knowledge questions 3 and 4 for the handgun-related homicide story (F = 13.6, d.f. = 2, 124, p = .0005) and the youth crime story (F = 14.3, d.f. = 2, 124, p = .0005), and on knowledge questions 5 and 6 for the homicide story (F = 5.29, d.f. = 2, 124, p = .006). Planned post-hoc analyses using Tukey's method revealed the differences to be as we hypothesized; there were significant differences between both the control group and the public health-text group (Youth Crime 3&4 p = .0005, Homicide 3&4 p = .0005, Homicide 5&6 p = .018) and between the control group and the public health-graphic group (Youth Crime 3&4 p = .0005, Homicide 3&4 p = .0005, Homicide 5&6 p = .01) for all significant variables. Therefore, Hypothesis 1a was confirmed. (Insert Table 3 About Here).

However, Hypothesis 1b was not completely confirmed for all variables; in only two out of three stories were the mean knowledge scores of the public health-graphic group higher than the mean knowledge scores of the public health-text group. For the homicide story, the public health-graphic group's mean knowledge score was .422 on questions 5 and 6 compared to the public health-text group's mean knowledge score of .405; and on questions 3 and 4, the public health-graphic group's mean score (.756) was also higher than the public health-text group's mean score (.614). But for questions 3 and 4 of the youth crime story, the public health-text group had a higher mean score (.632) than the public health-graphic group (.47), contrary to our hypothesis.

It appears that the public health information did increase readers' knowledge, however this effect was not consistent across all stories.

Hypotheses 2a & 2b

A factor analysis of all five variables for each story – interesting, believable, relevant, informative, and important – extracted a single factor for each story that we call "liking." (Insert Table 4a About Here).

Analysis of variance of the three liking factors all showed significant differences between groups . (Insert Table 4b About Here). For the Homicide Liking factor and the Alcohol Liking factor, Tukey's post hoc analyses showed the significant differences were between the control group and the public health-text group only (Homicide Liking p = .013, Alcohol Liking p = .001). For the Youth Liking factor, the significant differences were between both control group and public health-text group (p = .0005) and between control group and public health-graphic group (p = .046). However, in all cases, the mean liking factor scores were higher for the control group than for either public health group. Thus, Hypotheses 2a and 2b were not supported. It seems that adding base rate information to the exemplars in an attempt to add context actually decreases readers' liking for the stories. In all cases, readers of the public health stories found them to be significantly less interesting and/or relevant, believable, informative, and important than did readers of traditionally written stories that relied on exemplars and did not present base rate information. Furthermore, while not significantly different, the means for the public health-graphic groups were all lower on the liking factor than were the means for the public health-text or control groups. This has serious implications if the public health model of reporting is to appeal to readers.

Hypotheses 3 & 4

Seventeen variables designed to measure readers' attitudes toward the effectiveness of prevention and punishment on crime and violence were factor analyzed . Although the questions were designed to measure either preventive or punitive attitudes, factor analysis revealed a third, unanticipated factor, which we determined measured causal statements, that is, statements of risk factors and behaviors by the victims that may have lead to the crime. Seven variables loaded purely on Factor 1 – the causal factor, and five on Factor 2 – the punishment factor. Factor 3 – the prevention factor – was defined by two variables that loaded cleanly on it, and one that cross-loaded with Factor 2. Neither of the pure variables on Factor 3 were at .70 or higher, which would warrant cautious acceptance of a two-factor variable, so the cross-loaded variable was retained. (Insert Table 5A About Here). Interpretation of this variable ("Gun control laws should make sure that someone who has committed a crime cannot get access to a gun") revealed that it could indeed be construed as representing both prevention, since it aims to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, and also punishment, since it is a form of punishment to take guns away from individuals when they commit crimes. The residuals of the reproduced correlation matrix were all low, indicating little difference between the original and the reproduced correlation matrix. Two variables were dropped from analysis because of low communalities and factor loading scores less than .3. (See Table 5A).

Although all statements were written to reflect either punishment or prevention strategies, the emergence of a causal factor is interesting and in keeping with the public health model theory. The strongest factor, Factor 1, at first glance appeared to be a mix of punishment and prevention statements. However, closer inspection revealed the causal orientation of all the variables loaded on this factor. For example: "Anytime you go to a bar or party where alcohol is served, you have to worry about someone getting drunk and doing something violent," "It's especially dangerous for women to drink alcohol because they are vulnerable to being raped," and "If states would make it more difficult to get guns, we would have fewer random murders," all reflect prevention strategies. However, as our factor analysis point out, they are more importantly reflecting readers' awareness of the risk factors of crime and violence and their association with cause. These statements differ from those that loaded onto the prevention factor in that they are not blatant statements of what to do to prevent crime, but carry implications of risk and causation along with the idea of prevention. Similarly, the punitive statements that loaded on this factor also reflect an awareness of causation. For example, "Fraternities, sororities, and other university organizations that serve alcohol should be banned from participating in campus activities," "It's too easy for teenagers today to get guns; we should have harsher punishment for parents and other adults who allow teens access to guns," and "Anyone who violates the law while under the influence of alcohol should be treated more harshly than people who commit the same crime but are not under the influence" can be interpreted as two-fold – both causal and punitive.

The statements that loaded on the punishment factor are all unambiguous, blatant statements of punishment. For example, “Any teenager who commits a crime with a gun should be tried as an adult,” and “"We need to change the laws so that repeat violent offenders are locked up for at least 25 years.” The statements that loaded on the prevention factor are likewise unambiguous statements of prevention: “"Education and community involvement in prevention programs are more effective in reducing crime and violence than prisons,” and “I wouldn’t go to an isolated place like a car wash anytime except during the day.”

Analysis of variance of these three factors revealed significant differences on only one factor, the prevention factor (F = 3.315, d.f. = 2, 124, p = .04) with differences between the control group and the public health-graphic group (p = .05) in planned post hoc comparisons. As hypothesized, participants in the public health condition were more likely to support preventive measures than were participants in the control condition. (Insert Table 5B About Here). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was confirmed, the public health stories did induce these readers to support prevention more than traditional stories. But Hypothesis 4 was rejected since there was no significant difference between the public health groups and the control group on attitudes toward punishment. Deeper reflection on how these seemingly contradictory attitudes can coexist reveals them to be not so contradictory after all. Individuals can endorse socially based prevention measures without rejecting individual responsibility and therefore, punishment. Perhaps the endorsement of both social prevention measures in tandem with the desire to hold individuals accountable for their own actions and punish them accordingly represents a more sophisticated understanding of crime and violence than the either-or approach originally hypothesized.

There was also a significant gender difference on the prevention factor, with women supporting prevention statements more than men (F = 7.353, d.f. 1, p = .008).

Hypothesis 5

There was no support for the hypothesis that readers of public health stories would make more societal attributions of responsibility than individual attributions compared with readers of traditional stories. Our attribution of responsibility variables loaded onto two factors – one representing individual attributions, one representing societal attributions – just as we had planned, but analysis of variance revealed no significant differences. There were significant gender differences, however. Women made sigificantly more societal attributions of responsibility regarding preventionthan did men (F = 4.02, d.f. = 2, p = .047).

Hypothesis 6

The hypothesis that readers of public health stories would agree more strongly than readers of traditional stories that the stories illustrated the consequences of crime, however, there was significant difference between readers of the public health-text version and readers of the public health-graphics version (F = 5.362, d.f. = 2, p = .006). Three statements of consequences, one for each story, measured on four-point Likert scales were combined (Cronbach's alpha = .70). Post hoc test revealed that readers of the public health-graphic stories agreed significantly more with consequence statements such as, "This story shows that one consequence of alcohol abuse is increased sexual assaults," or "This story shows that one consequence of the increased availability of handguns is more youth violence" than did readers of the public health-text only version.

Stereotyping Findings

While no formal hypothesis about stereotyping was proposed, there were some interesting findings regarding participants' tendency to stereotype crime victims and assailants by race. Even though all stories were written to eliminate any mention of race, names were changed to be ethnically ambiguous, and locations were fictitious to avoid any racial inferences, we wondered if readers' preexisting schemas about race and crime would influence their reading of these stories. For each of the three stories, respondents were asked "What race would you say the people in this story were" and were given choices of black, white, Hispanic, Asian, other and not sure for both assailant and victim. Despite overt attempts to present the stories in a race-neutral manner, and even after offering the option to choose "can't tell" rather than a specific race, 89.9% of this study's respondents imputed race on one or more of the six questions. Only 10.1% never imputed race. There were clear patterns of racial stereotyping by story subject as well. In the story about an alcohol-related rape at a fraternity, 79.5% of respondents said both assailant and victim were white. In the story about a shooting at an after-school basketball game 52% of respondents said both assailant and victim were black. The handgun-related murder at a car wash was the most ambiguous story; 49% of respondents said "can't tell" to one or more questions. Still, 22% said both assailant and victim were white, and 16.5% said the assailant was white and the victim black. Analysis of variance revealed no significant differences on frequency of stereotyping by treatment condition, however control group participants who read the traditional stories had a higher mean than either of the public health groups.

DISCUSSION

These two experiments on the cognitive and attitudinal impact of crime stories written to include a public health context are exploratory, but they suggest some significant possibilities and concerns. The first study provided demonstration that embedding public health information into stories can change reader's attributions of responsibility. Attitudes become more critical of society's role in crime and violence rather than simply focusing on the individual's role. In fact, there is less individual blame in the public health contexted stories, and there is less "fatalism" of the sort represented by the statement "there's nothing anyone could have done to prevent this." But in experiment 1, there was no evidence that the public health story readers thought differently about prevention, consequences, or causes. After the fact, we thought the manipulations may not have been strong enough, or the single encounter with such stories in the laboratories was not sufficient to create differentiated cognitions or attitudes about these aspects of crime.

Experiment 2 was designed to make the public health information more salient to individuals, in the graphic presentation, in fact, to pull out the information and locate it separately from the story itself. We also embedded the stories in simulated newspaper environments with the intent to make the experimental environment more ecologically valid.

Although there was some variation across stories, there was strong indication that both the public health text-alone material and the public health graphic condition led to greater acquisition of knowledge. But surprisingly, the graphic condition did not consistently prove stronger than the text-alone condition. Thus people do pick up the public health information, but seem to do as well when it is in the story itself as when it occurs in a separate location.

Also surprising and certainly troubling for the perspective that the addition of public health information on crime is important for citizens to have available, was the fact that the public-health enhanced stories were evaluated more negatively by a factor that was a blend of interesting, believable, and important. Without the feature of "liking" for stories, readers are obviously less likely to read, and lack of this most basic motivation is troubling. We don't know exactly how much of "news" people could be said to "like" in the sense used here, but clearly the impact of the approach advocated by public health professionals (Dorfman et al.) will depend on explorations in writing these kinds of stories in a way that make readers evaluate it more positively.

Most important in Experiment 2, we found that simply reading three stories in which crime was embedded in a context that showed how the event fit into base rate and causal linkages had a significant effect on how much readers agreed with a prevention perspective.

For example, people were more likely in the public health context conditions to agree that education and community involvement in prevention programs were more effective in reducing crime and violence than prisons. But interestingly, there was no corresponding greater disagreement with punishment statements such as , "A murder that results from a robbery is just as bad as premeditated murder and perpetrators should get the same punishment." In current studies of news effects, punishment and prevention approaches are considered two ends of a single continuum. Here, however, the scales were independent of each other and that independence was validated by the fact that our experimental stories affected the prevention responses but not the punishment responses. Actually, this makes some intuitive sense in that one might strongly want to manipulate the social environment so as to increase prevention, but when prevention fails, one might be just as eager to punish individuals.

A final important aspect of Experiment 2 was the emergence of a non-predicted scale of what we dubbed "causality." The items in this scale were originally designed to be either prevention or punishment items, but instead these items became a dimension independent of either of those other scales. What links them is that they are of the form "If-then." "If you go to where alcohol is served, you have to worry about violence." Or, "If states make it more difficult to get guns, there would be fewer random murders." While these statements may imply a prevention approach, they are in a form that people can better use as what might be called "rules for safer living." For our participants, these "if-then rules" are different from the classic notions of prevention and punishment. Apparently, however, the causality dimension was too strongly embedded in people for it to be significantly affected by the stories in the public health condition. The present results suggest that further foundational work is needed in identifying and classifying the kinds of ideas people have about public health issues.

As with any laboratory approach to studying the news, a major caveat is the fact that a brief reading of newspaper stories cannot be expected to produce the same kind or degree

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

of impact that everyday reading amassed over long time periods may have. We would eventually hope that a real newspaper would be willing to adopt crime reporting of the type experimented with here, thus allowing research on the long-term effects.

Talking about crime episodes while also pointing out their pattern of occurrence, and what variables are associated with their occurrence can produce enhanced knowledge in readers. Although we worked hard here to produce interesting and credible stories, adding the public health material did not enhance evaluations from readers. But even though the manipulation was a brief, one-time-only event, the result did demonstrate that attitudes toward prevention could be affected. The next steps we suggest are further experimenting with how these stories can be written better, in a more motivating way for readers, and with movement toward testing the long term impact of changing our way of reporting crime to a way that helps citizens understand it as a public health disease.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank Lori Dorfman of the Berkeley Media Studies Group and Jane Stevens, Discovery Channel and the New York Times Online, for their leadership in articulating public health approaches to crime and violence reporting and their help in editing the news stories tested here.

NOTES

Reliability as calculated using Scott's Pi for each category was as follows: Just World = 1.0; Fatalism = 1.0; Comprehensibility, broken into Causes = .88, Consequences = 1.0, Prevention = .8, and Generalizations = .846; Attribution of Responsibility = .6; Believability = .8; Journalistic Criticism, broken into Structural = .714, Conventions = .88, Clarity = .714, and Public Health Information = .83.

TABLE 1

ANOVAs of Attribution of Responsibility Thoughts by Condition

	Control Group Mean	Public Health-Text Mean	Public Health - Graphic Mean	F Value
Societal				
Total Thoughts	.093	.009	.065	3.5*
Negative Thoughts	.000	.009	.037	2.71
Positive Thoughts	.000	.000	.000	
Neutral Thoughts	.093	.000	.028	5.74**
Individual				
Total Thoughts	.232	.027	.093	7.59***
Negative Thoughts	.13	.009	.065	3.65*
Positive Thoughts	.000	.000	.000	
Neutral Thoughts	.102	.018	.029	5.05**

* p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001

TABLE 2

ANOVAS of World View Categories by Condition

	Control Group Mean	Public Health-Text Mean	Public Health - Graphic Mean	F Value
Fatalism	.343	.134	.093	6.56**
Just World	.120	.125	.129	.008
Comprehensibility	.019	.000	.037	1.24
Generalizations	.796	.848	1.31	4.102*
Prevention	.306	.214	.204	.927
Consequences	.352	.232	.167	2.83
Causes	.583	.598	.379	1.88

* p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE 3

ANOVA Results of Knowledge Variables by Story and Condition

	F value	Significant Post Hoc Means	
Alcohol Story			
Knowledge 1&2	.815		
Knowledge 3&4	1.458		
Knowledge 5&6	.267		
Youth Story			
Knowledge 1&2	.155		
Knowledge 3&4	14.31***	Control -.005	PH-text .632*** PH-graphic .47***
Knowledge 5&6	1.299		
Homicide Story			
Knowledge 1&2	1.081		
Knowledge 3&4	13.603***	Control .000	PH-text .614*** PH-graphic .756***
Knowledge 5&6	5.287**	Control .000	PH-text .405* PH-graphic .422**

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE 4A

Factor Loadings by Factor by retained Scale Items for Important, Relevant, Information, Interesting and Believable Statements

	Youth Liking Factor	Alcohol Liking Factor	Homicide Liking Factor
Important	.744	.737	.784
Relevant	.714	.732	*
Gave Information	.597	.677	.747
Interesting	.597	.579	.689
Believable	.436	.523	.618

*In the Homicide Liking factor, multicollinearity was detected between the variables Relevant and Important, so the Relevant variable was removed.

TABLE 4B

ANOVA Results of Liking Factors by Story and Condition

	F value	Post Hoc Means	
Alcohol Liking Factor	6.714**	Control .38	PH-text -.315*** PH-graphic -.044
Youth Liking Factor	7.189***	Control .391	PH-text -.319*** PH-graphic -.049*
Homicide Liking Factor	4.043*	Control .303	PH-text -.264* PH-graphic -.023

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TABLE 5A

Factor Loadings by Factor of Retained Scale Items of Causal, Punishment, and Prevention Statements

	Causal Factor	Punishment Factor	Prevention Factor
Q5 - Worry in a bar	.609	.029	.057
Q8 - Ban alcohol on campus	.585	.067	.013
Q7 - Harsh on alcohol crime	.570	.185	-.068
Q6 - Women vulnerable when drinking	.497	.074	.177
Q9 -Warn teens about crowds	.421	.237	.0757
Q13 - Make it difficult to get guns	.321	.041	-.038
	.299	.066	-.183
Q16 - Death penalty for all murders	-.021	.585.	-.166
Q12- Try teens with guns as adults	.158	.552	-.033
Q3 - Have repeat offender laws	-.017	.465	.139
Q15 - All murders as bad as premeditated	-.018	.421	.268
Q4 - Keep suspects in jail until trial	.249	.328	.002
Q2-Education is effective prevention	-.028	.207	.615
Q14-Don't go to isolated places	.031	.246	.575
Q17-Make it so criminals can't get guns	.259	.325	.387

NOTE: Questions 1 and 10 were deleted because of low and complex loadings. Question 17 was transformed using a 1/X procedure to improve normality.

TABLE 5B

ANOVA Results of Causal, Punishment, and Prevention Factors by Condition

	F value	Post Hoc Means			
Causal Factor	2.12	Control	.211	PH-text	-.031
				PH-graphic	-.158
Punishment Factor	.142	Control	.037	PH-text	-.054
				PH-graphic	.018
Prevention Factor	3.315*	Control	-.257	PH-text	-.084
				PH-graphic	.150*

* p < .05

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SOURCES

Ajzen, I. & Fishbein, M. 1975. *Belief, attitude, intention, and behaviour: An introduction to theory and research.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Astor, D. 1994. Covering kids: Children's advocacy group head says many newspapers are devoting too much space to stories about youth violence, *Editor & Publisher*, 127(50): 9.

Baran, S.J. & Davis, D.K. 1995. *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment and future*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Brewer, W.F. & Nakamura, G.V. (1984). The nature and functions of schemas. In Wyer, R.S. & Srull, T.K. (Eds.), *Handbook of social cognition*, pp. 119-160. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Brosius, Hans-Bernd & Bathelt, Anke. 1994. The utility of exemplars in persuasive communications. *Communication Research*, 21, 48-78.

Cohen, B.C. 1963. *The press and foreign policy.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Combs, B. & Slovic, P. 1979. Newspaper coverage of causes of death, *Journalism Quarterly,* 56: 837- 843, 849.

Davis, J.F. 1952. Crime news in Colorado newspapers. *American Journal of Sociology,* LVII (June), pp. 325-30.

Dorfman, L.; Woodruff, K.; Chavez, V. & Wallack, L. 1997. Youth and violence on local television news in California, *American Journal of Public Health*, 87(8): 1311-1316.

Einsiedel, E.F.; Salomone, K.L., & Schneider, F.P. 1984. Crime: Effects of media exposure and personal experience on issue salience, *Journalism Quarterly,* 61(1): 131-136.

Entman, R.M. 1993. Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm, *Journal of Communication*, 43(4): 51-58.

Ericson, R.V.; Baranek, P.M. & Chan, J.B.L. 1991. *Representing order: Crime, law and justice in the news media.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fisher, J.; Gandy, O.H. & Janus, N.Z. 1981. The role of popular media in defining sickness and health, in McAnany, E.G.; Schnitman, J. & Janus, N. (Eds.) *Communication and social structure*, New York: Praeger.

Freimuth, V.S.; Greenberg, R.H; DeWitt, J. & Romano, R.M. 1984. Covering cancer: Newspapers and the public interest. *Journal of Communication*, 34: 62-73. Winter.

Gebotys, R.J.; Roberts, J.V. & DasGupta, B. 1988. News media use and public perceptions of crime seriousness. *Canadian Journal of Criminology,* 30(1): 3-16.

Gibson, R. & Zillmann, D. 1998. Effects of citation in exemplifying testimony on issue perception, *Journalism & Mass Comm Quarterly,* 75(1), 167-176.

Gibson, R. & Zillmann, D. 1994. Exaggerated versus representative exemplification in news reports: Perception of issues and personal consequences. *Communication Research,* 21(5);603-624.

Goffman, E. 1974. *Frame analysis*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gordon, M.T. & Heath, L. 1981. The news business, crime, and fear. In D. Lewis (Ed.), *Reactions to crime*, pp. 227-250. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Grabe, M.E. 1996. Tabloid and traditional television news magazine crime stories: Crime lessons and reaffirmation of social class distinctions, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly,* 73(4): 926-946.

Graber, D. 1980. *Crime news and the public.* New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc.

Graber, D. 1984. *Processing the news: How people tame the information tide.* New York: Longman.

Griffin, J.L. & Stevenson, R.L. 1992. Influence of text & graphics in increasing understanding of foreign news content, *Newspaper Research Journal*, Spring 1992, pp. 85-99.

Harris, R.J. 1994. *A cognitive psychology of mass communication.* 2nd Edition. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Heath, L. 1984. Impact of newspaper crime reports on fear of crime: Multimethodological investigation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 47(2): 263-276.

Iyengar, S. 1991. *Is anyone responsible?: How television frames political issues.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jacob, H. 1984. *The frustration of policy: Responses to crime by American cities.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Jaehnig, W.B.; Weaver, D.H. & Fico, F. 1981. Reporting crime and fearing crime in three communities, *Journal of Communication,* 31(1): 88-96.

Jones, E.E. 1979. The rocky road from acts to dispositions. *American Psychologist,* 34: 107-117.

Kahneman, D. & Tversky, A. 1973. On the psychology of prediction. *Psychological Review*, 80, 237-251.

Kirkhorn, M.J. 1996. Violent crime, *Nieman Reports,* 50(3): 4-9.

Leps, M.C. 1992. Apprehending the criminal: *The production of deviance in 19th century discourse.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Lerner, M.J. 1970. The desire for justice and reactions to victims. In J. Macaulay & L. Berkowitz (Eds.) *Altruism and helping behavior*. New York: Academic Press.

Lerner, M.J. & Matthews, G. 1967. Reactions to suffering of others under conditions of indirect responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 5:319-325.

Lerner, M.J. & Simmons, C.H. 1966. Observer's reaction to the "innocent victim:" Compassion or rejection? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 4:203-210.

Levin, A. (Ed.) 1979. *Focus on health: Issues and events of 1978 from the New York Times Information Bank*. New York: Arno Press.

Liska, A.E. & Baccaglini, W. 1990. Feeling safe by comparison: Crime in the newspapers, *Social Problems*, 37(3): 360-374.

McCombs, M.E. & Shaw, D. 1972. The agenda-setting function of the mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176-187.

Milio, N. 1985. Health education = health instruction + health news: Media experiences in the United States, Finland, Australia, and England, in Rubinstein, E.A. & Brown, J.D. (Eds.) *The media, social science, and social policy for children*, pp 118-136, Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corp.

Peffley, M., Shields, T. & Williams, B. 1996. The intersection of race and crime in television news stories: An experimental study. *Political Communication*, 13:309-327.

Petty, R. & Cacioppo, J. 1981. *Attitudes and persuasion: Classic and contemporary approaches*. Dubuque, IA: Brown.

Roller, B.V. 1980. Graph reading abilities of 13-year-olds, in, Kolers, P.A.; Wrolstad, M.E; and Bouma, H (Eds.) *Processing of visible Language* 2, New York and London: Plenum Press, p 305-314.

Rotter, J.B. 1954. *Social Learning and Clinical Psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Rotter, J.B., Chance, J. & Phares, E.J. (Eds.) 1972. *Applications of a Social Learning Theory of Personality*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Rubin, A. 1986. Uses, gratifications, and media effects, pp. 1-16, in Bryant, J. & Zillmann, D. (Eds.) *Perspectives on media effects*. Hillsdale, N.J. Lawrence Erlbaum.

Rumelhart, D.E. 1980. Schemata; Building blocks of cognition. In Spiro, R.J., Bruce, B.C. & Brewer, W.F. (Eds.) *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension*, pp. 33-58. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Scheingold, S.A. 1991. *The politics of crime: Criminal process and cultural obsession*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Severin, W.J. & Tankard, J.W. Jr. 1992. *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media*. New York: Longman.

Shapiro, M. A. 1994. Think-aloud and thought-list procedures in investigating mental processes. pp. 1-14 in Lang, A. (Ed.) *Measuring psychological responses to media messages*, Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D. 1991. *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content*. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishing Group.

Silk, M. 1995. *Unsecular Media*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Smith, S.J. 1984. Crime in the news, *British Journal of Criminology*, 24(3): 289-295.

Stark, P.M. & Hollander, B.A. 1990. Information graphics: Do they help readers understand news events?" Presented to the Visual Communication Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (August, 1990), p. 7.

Stepp, C.S. 1998. The fallout from too much crime coverage, *American Journalism Review*, 20(3): 55. April 1998.

Stevens, J.E. 1994. Treating violence as an epidemic, *Technology Review*, 94(6): 22-8. August-September.

Stevens, J. 1997. *Reporting on violence: A handbook for journalists*. Berkeley , CA: Berkeley Media Studies Group.

Stroman, C.A. & Seltzer, R. 1985. Media use and perceptions of crime, *Journalism Quarterly*, 62(2): 345-345.

Thorndyke , P.W. 1984. Applications of schema theory in cognitive research. In Anderson, J.R. & Kosslyn, S.M.(Eds.) *Tutorials in learning and memory*, pp. 167-192. San Francisco: Freeman.

van Dijk, T.A. 1993. *Elite discourse and racism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Vernon, M.D. 1951. Learning and understanding. *the Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 3:19-23.

Vernon, M.D. 1946. Learning from graphical material, *the British Journal of Psychology*, 36:145-158.

Wallack, L. 1990. Mass media and health promotion: Promise, problem and challenge, in Atkin, C. and Wallack, L. (Eds.), *Mass Communication and Public Health: Complexities and Conflicts*, pp. 41-51. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Wanta, W. & Remy, J. 1995. Information recall of 4 elements among young newspaper readers, *Newspaper Research Journal*, 16(2): 112-123.

Ward, D.B. 1992. The effectiveness of sidebar graphics, *Journalism Quarterly*, Summer 1992, pp. 318-326.

Weaver, D.H.; Hopkins, W.W.; Billings, W.H. & Cole, R.R. 1974. Quotes vs. paraphrases in writing: Does it make a difference to readers? *Journalism Quarterly*, Autumn 1974, p. 400-404.

Williams, P. & Dickinson, J. 1993. Fear of crime: Read all about it? The relationship between newspaper crime reporting and fear of crime. *Journal of Criminology*, 33(1): 33-56.

an Issue Campaign

Glenn Leshner, Ph.D.
Maria E. Len-Rios, Doctoral Student
Missouri School of Journalism

Running head: POLITICAL TALK

All correspondence to:
Glenn Leshner
283 Gannett Hall
School of Journalism
University of Missouri
Columbia, MO 65211
Voice: 573/884-6676
Fax: 573/882-4823
e-mail: leshnerg@missouri.edu

Note: Glenn Leshner is an associate professor and Maria Len-Rios is a doctoral student, both at the Missouri School of Journalism.

Paper presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division
of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass
Communication annual conference, Phoenix, August 2000

Political Talk, Not All "Hot Air" A Path Model Predicting Knowledge, Cynicism & Vote in an Issue Campaign

Abstract

This study used regional telephone survey data collected after a 1999 off-season issue election to examine how campaign media and interpersonal political discussion predict how much voters learned about the issue, how they voted, and how politically cynical they were. Three distinct types of voters were identified: those who thought the issue was important, those who reported being involved in the campaign, and those who relied on endorsements to decide how to vote. After demographic variables were controlled, issue importance predicted talking to other people about the issue, which, in turn, predicted how much these voters knew about the issue, their level of cynicism, and voting for the issue. Voters who most relied on endorsements paid attention to only TV ads, which did not predict any of the outcome variables, but was correlated with all of the other communication variables. Those who indicated they were involved in the campaign paid more attention to media campaign information than those who thought the campaign was important. This suggests a role for campaign media that has received little attention thus far: that campaign communication can involve voters who don't necessarily think the issues in the campaign are important.

Political Talk, Not All "Hot Air" A Path Model Predicting Knowledge, Cynicism & Vote in an Issue Campaign

Ever since Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet published *The People's Choice* in 1948 introducing the *two-step flow* theory of interpersonal influence, scholars have been interested in the effects interpersonal communication has on dispersing media messages and shaping public policy. According to the theory, opinion leaders, "people who were heavily exposed to the political campaign to whom others, who had lower levels of exposure, knowledge, and interest, would turn for information and advice" (Lowery & DeFleur, 1988, p.100), would influence the judgments of others. The *two-step flow* hypothesis pertains to persuasion and knowledge. The idea that those who are less knowledgeable learn about politics through discussion with others is an intriguing idea, and supports the notion of media's limited effects.

Today, many consider the two-step flow theory to be too parsimonious. As early as 1972, Robinson noted that "The earlier hypothesis of the two-step flow of information from the media to 'opinion leaders' to the rest of the public clearly distorts the nature and complexity of the information diffusion process." Current thought supports the idea of a multi-flow theory where information is diffused through a combination of media and interpersonal networks.

The goal of this paper is to examine what role interpersonal communication plays in predicting issue knowledge, political cynicism and real vote. More specifically we are interested in examining how a group of Midwestern voters, in an April 1999 concealed weapons issue (Proposition B on the ballot), learned about the issue through media and talking to others. We are also interested in the associations among media and interpersonal communication.

Campaign Context

The concealed weapons issue was the first in the country to allow state voters to decide whether or not to permit carrying of concealed weapons. At the time of the vote, 31 state legislatures across the nation allowed the use of concealed weapons. The campaign to pass the concealed weapons referendum was considered an opportunity for the National Rifle Association (NRA) to gain more ground nationwide (Marshall, 1999). According to Gimpel (1998, p. 635), speaking of the NRA's efforts nationwide, "The competition between gun control and gun rights forces is growing more intense, not less, with every passing legislative session." For six years, the state governor had refused to sign the legislation, so the bill's sponsor presented it to the state's voters (Corrigan, 1999).

One of the state's city police officers' associations was divided on providing support for the measure and there were accusations of false advertising and misrepresentation of police officer support made against the police officers association (Corrigan, 1999). Non-member officers charged that the association's leaders were hoping for NRA financial backing to pursue advantages for its members. According to the *Los Angeles Times* (1999), the NRA provided more than $3.7 million in funding to support campaigning statewide for the measure. The NRA brought in its president, Charlton Heston, to campaign in the state's two largest cities. One of the state's US Senators publicly supported the measure. Ultimately, the referendum was defeated by a slim margin --52% to 48%, largely due to voters from large urban areas.

This paper explores data from a cross-sectional telephone survey taken for a week immediately after the concealed weapons issue vote. We will examine the relationships among our media variables and interpersonal communication. Also of importance is whether communication relationships are associated with the respondents' perceptions of how important the issue is, their campaign involvement, and the role endorsements play in predicting issue knowledge, political attitudes, and behavior.

Previous research has shown that there are different types of publics surrounding an issue—attentive publics and latent publics. McCombs, Einsiedel and Weaver (1991, p. 68) distinguish the attentive public as one with high issue interest, higher issue knowledge and greater information seeking. Pinkleton's (1999) concept of issue or image message processors also indicates that there are distinct issue publics defined by how they use campaign information channels. Based on these concepts, we will also study whether there are distinct issue publics based on respondents' perceptions of issue importance, campaign involvement and the level of engagement in interpersonal communication.

In summary, this study will investigate (1) the role of interpersonal communication and media use on predicting issue knowledge, political cynicism and real vote, (2) the predictors of the attention to the issue in newspapers, TV news, TV ads, and talking to others about the issue, and (3) the different cognitive processes associated with Pinkelton's concept of image or issue publics and typologies of voters based on their relationship to the issue and the campaign.

Literature Review

Talking About Politics

How much do people really talk about politics? According to Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987, p. 1200), "readily available political information from the modern mass media may, because of its increased uniformity and homogeneity, increase rather than decrease the political influence potential of the social context." The authors argue that one-newspaper towns and similar news headlines across media may spur more interpersonal discussion about issues especially when individuals feel their opinions are not represented in these information resources.

In examining the contribution of the news media, interpersonal communication and information from political campaigns to three types of political knowledge in a heated off-year election, Berkowitz and Pritchard (1989) found that only political interest, age, education, and reliance on newspapers were consistent predictors of knowledge. Leshner (1995, p. 8), in a study focusing on a complicated issue election, found that conversation attention, or "how much attention they paid to what family, friends, and colleagues were saying" about the issue was significantly related to television reliance and newspaper reliance--which were both significantly related to issue knowledge.

Robinson and Davis (1990) argue that media use and interpersonal communication work together to increase comprehension (and thus knowledge about politics). In their analysis of 1985 and 1986 national election studies data, they found that interpersonal communication about news (particularly from newspapers) increased comprehension about politics and suggested that "interpersonal communication can act as a catalyst to process information from news channels" (p. 116).

Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) found that individuals constructed social interpersonal networks with people that shared their political views and usually tended to get the information correct when talking with like-minded partners. Robinson and Levy (1986) found that those who indicated they'd talked to others about just one of the week's "big news" stories, were more likely to score higher on a news comprehension scale.

Robinson and Levy (1986) also found that almost 75% of the conversations respondents had were with friends or co-workers. Straits (1991) found that proximity best predicted individuals' political discussion partners. Typically, these were co-workers or spouses. Straits also found that those who were relatively uninterested in politics more frequently reported discussing politics with a spouse. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) also found that interpersonal communication could be constrained, depending on who was available to serve as a communication partner.

In a recent study of relevance of information sources in a candidate election, Pinkleton (1999) found that involvement (an index of whether respondents thought the election was interesting, cared about, and thought the election outcome was important) was not associated with newspaper relevance (its importance, usefulness or informativeness). He did find that involvement was negatively related to TV ad relevance, but was not related to TV news. Pinkleton (1999, p. 73) further suggested that relevance of interpersonal communication would be associated with issue decision-making, while image attention would be more positively related to advertising relevance. Findings indicated that for respondents who attended to issues, evaluations of the relevance of interpersonal communication increased. The author concluded that interpersonal communication "is an especially useful source of election information for highly involved voters who attend to candidate issues."

Dual-Processing Routes to Issue Knowledge

The work by McCombs, Einsiedel and Weaver (1991) suggests that there are different types of publics based on their rating of campaign attentiveness. Pinkleton (1999) submits that voters differ in their orientation to image or issue mediums of communication. Here we explore how these types of individuals can further be distinguished by applying the heuristic-systematic model (HSM) of cognitive processing to the conceptual definitions of these typologies (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994).

Chaiken, et al.'s HSM model has numerous underlying assumptions that are necessary to list in order to illustrate how different forms of media use and involvement would predict different levels of knowledge, cynicism and vote. The model supposes that individuals process information in one of two ways, systematically or heuristically. It further specifies that:

1) Systematic processing is controlled, intentional, uses greater cognitive capacity and is more effortful.

2) People must be motivated to process messages systematically.

3) Heuristic processing occurs when subjects utilize minimal information to determine message validity quickly and efficiently.

4) Individuals' dominant motivational concern could be assumed to be the desire to form and hold valid, accurate attitudes.

5) Systematic and heuristic processing can occur simultaneously.

6) Assumes people prefer less effortful processing to attain a sufficiently confident assessment of the validity of a message's advocated position.

There are a panoply of assumptions related to specific facets of the HSM model. To summarize for our purposes, messages that are processed in a systematic manner require the individual to pay attention and carefully evaluate the merits of the information they are presented with. Heuristic processing on the other hand, relies on simple cues (e.g., such as a simple rule, "a longer paper is a better paper") to form decisions so as to reduce the necessary amount of cognitive effort.

Based on the definitions of mental processing, we can make some inferences about how different types of individuals would engage in information-seeking for political information from specific media and how it might effect how they voted.

Pinkleton (1999) proposes that issue-oriented publics rely more on interpersonal communication and that image-oriented publics rely more on television advertising. By logical deduction we can infer that the brevity of TV ads lend them to process ad images more heuristically than would be required for partaking in political discussion. Involvement in political discussion infers a more active public. Those who view TV ads usually happen on them accidentally during other regularly scheduled programming. One must, on the other hand, take a more active and planned role in interpersonal communication.

The HSM model would suggest that those who are more attentive to the issue are more motivated to systematically process messages. Systematic processing of messages would more closely be associated with active involvement, which is typified by increased knowledge by talking to others and newspaper readership (Chaffee & Hochheimer, 1985). Hence, we would predict that those who believe the issue is important and are involved in the campaign would be more likely to talk to others and hence know more about the campaign since they had carefully processed the information.

Heuristic processing is typified by reliance on simple cues to process information and make decisions. Those who rely mainly on image or TV ads would be less active information-seekers and, by deduction, would tend to process information heuristically. In our study we also include the concept of relying on endorsements to make voting decisions. In the issue campaign on which the current study focuses, endorsements were publicly made by the state's governor, one of the state's US Senators, the National Rifle Association, and the state's Police Chief's Association.

Processing an endorsement should take minimal cognitive effort and may serve to aid individuals process information according to the *sufficiency principle*—using the least amount of information to help them decide how to vote. Because the different endorsements investigated here were highly partisan, we would expect that those individuals who relied on endorsements would be more likely to vote for the position espoused by the endorser with which they most closely identified. As endorsements and TV ads can be considered heuristic cues, we would not expect reliance on endorsements to be associated with increased issue knowledge. In fact, some voters may rely on issue endorsements precisely because they don't want to or cannot make sufficient effort to learn extensively about the issue. We do not predict an association between heuristic processors (endorsement reliant voters) and political cynicism. We do, however, expect those who are attentive and involved in the issue to be less cynical because cynicism is suspected to be related to low political involvement (Pinkleton, Austin & Fortman, 1998).

Findings on the impact of TV news on issue knowledge have been mixed. TV news has been found to be a poor information source by some (DeFleur, Davenport, Cronin, & DeFleur, 1992; Robinson & Davis, 1990; Robinson & Levy, 1986; Stauffer, Frost, & Rybolt, 1981; cf. Wicks & Drew, 1991), but not by others (Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; Martinelli & Chaffee, 1995). Chaffee and Schleuder (1986) showed that effects of TV news depends, in part, on how it is measured. According to the HSM model, TV news could be processed systematically if motivation were present to analyze the TV news information. However, if the viewer was not motivated to analyze the messages, the viewer would be more likely to process the message heuristically. TV news does not fit easily into Pinkleton's (1999) categories of an issue medium or an image medium, especially in a campaign context dominated by an issue and lacking in statewide or national candidates running for office. It is suspected that TV news may function as a little of both—issue and image.

HSM and Pinkleton's conceptualization of image and issue information support the following expectations, established around the three types of voters: issue importance, involved in the campaign, and endorsement reliant:

1) Those who believed the issue was important should talk to others about the issue more than those who believed the issue was less important. They should also know more about the issue, and be less politically cynical.

2) Those who found the campaign involving should talk to others about the issue, pay more attention to newspapers, and know more about the issue than the less involved. This group should score lower on the cynicism scale.

3) Those who relied on endorsements should pay attention more to TV ads than those who didn't rely on endorsements, but should not know more about the issue.

4) Using media and talking to others should be associated with voting for or against the issue.

Method

A cross-section telephone survey (N=606) was conducted for one week immediately after an April 6, 1999, election (April 7—14) in a small television market. Because April elections traditionally generate low voter turnout and because we were attempting to get about 50% voters, the sample was drawn from the list of voters who had voted in the previous November 1998 election.

The interviews were conducted by a professional research survey center at a large Midwestern university ($N = 255$) and by an undergraduate research methods class at the same university ($N = 351$). A research center staff member trained the students before they conducted the interviews. Students surveyed only residents in the county's dominant city, while the survey center surveyed both city and out-county residents. Because the two samples differed somewhat on a number of demographic variables, the validity of the students' samples cannot be directly checked against the survey center's samples. The students' samples closely aligned with the distribution of known demographic variables, but there were some differences between the survey center's and students' samples. For example, the students' samples were slightly older (mean age=51 vs. 48, $p < .05$), more educated ($p < .05$), and had higher income ($p < .001$), all of which reflect known distributions of city/county demographics. There was no difference in the mean knowledge between the two samples. The samples did not differ on level of cynicism, campaign attention, or media use.

Actual voting rates were obtained for the sample and afforded a more direct comparison of the sample to the population from which it was drawn (voters in the November 1998 general election). Of the people who voted in November 1998, 74.6% also voted in the April 1999 election. The professional research center respondents had a voting rate of 78.2% in the April election; the student respondents had a voting rate of 80.1%. The samples obtained by both the professional research center and the students voted slightly higher than did the population from which they were drawn.

Criterion Measures

Political Knowledge. Measurement for *political knowledge* was a summed index of seven items representing information carried prominently by both newspaper and television news about the concealed weapons issue. Three questions asked about specifics of the concealed weapons ballot measure (hours of handgun safety training required; cost of concealed weapons permit; length of time permit would be valid before it expired). Four questions asked about publicly stated endorsement stances (endorsements were made by the governor, one U.S. Senator, the National Rifle Association, and the state police chief's association). Respondents received one point for each correct response and zero points for either an incorrect response or for failing to respond.

Political Cynicism. Political cynicism was a mean index of four items representing respondents' beliefs about politicians (Cronbach's alpha = .78, eigenvalue = 2.41, 60.2% of variance). Respondents were read four statements about politicians and asked if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed with each. The four statements were: (1) "Many politicians really try to represent the interests of the people," (2) "Politicians are usually honorable people who are dedicated to public service," (3) "Many politicians' votes are for sale to the highest bidder," and (4) "Many politicians are motivated by greed." Respondents who agreed with statements 3 and 4 and disagreed with statements 1 and 2 scored higher on the cynicism scale.

Vote. Respondents were asked if they voted in favor of the ballot proposition or against it. One hundred and seventy-four (28.7%) respondents reported they voted for the Proposition; 338 (55.8%) reported voting against it, 54 (8.9%) said they didn't vote, 38 (6.3%) refused to report their vote, and 2 (0.3%) reported they were unsure. Vote was coded as 1=voted for the issue and 0=voted against the issue. Those respondents who either refused to report how they voted, said they didn't vote, or were unsure, were eliminated from the analysis.

Predictor Variables

The demographic variables for each cross section were measures typically used in surveys of this type: *education, age, income, race, gender.* Only 7% of the entire sample identified themselves as a race other than white. Therefore, race was dummy coded as non-white (0) and white (1).

Political variables were *endorsements, issue importance,* and *campaign involvement. Endorsements* was a summed index (Cronbach's alpha = .63, eigenvalue 1.92, 47.9% variance) of four questions measured on 4-point scales by responses to the questions 1) "To what degree do you think (state's Governor's) opinions on Proposition B affected your own voting decisions?" The Governor spoke out publicly against the proposition. The other three questions used the same question stem, but were asked for the positions of one of the state's US Senators (for), National Rifle Association (for), and the state's Police Chief's Association (against). All four positions were heavily covered in the media. All items were coded so that 4=a lot and 1=none at all.

Issue importance was measured by a single item "How important do you think the concealed weapons issue was?" Responses were measured on a 4-point scale where 4=a lot and 1=none at all.

Campaign involvement was measured by summing responses to two items: "How interesting do you think the campaign about Proposition B was?" and "How exciting do you think the campaign about Proposition B was?" For the first question, responses were measured on a 4-point scale where 4=very interesting and 1=not interesting at all. Response categories for the second question were 4=very exciting and 1=not exciting at all ($r = .56, p < .01$).

The three predictor variables, endorsement, issue importance, and campaign involvement were not correlated with each other, and therefore, can be thought of as representing distinct types of voters. For example, those high on campaign involvement were not necessarily high on rating the issue as important. Similarly, those who reported relying on endorsements to make their voting decisions were not necessarily low on issue importance. As a result, it is convenient to think of these variables as distinct ways that the voters on our sample were oriented to the ballot issue.

Intervening Variables

There were four variables thought to intervene between the predictor and criterion variables in this study. Three media attention questions asked respondents to indicate on a 4-point scale how much attention they paid to the concealed weapons issue via newspaper stories, TV news stories, and TV ads. Respondents were also asked "How much did you talk to others about the concealed weapons issue?" These four items were anchored by 4=a lot and 1=not at all.

Design

Path analysis was the primary analysis tool. All possible paths between the predictor variables (endorsements, issue importance, and campaign involvement) and the intervening variables (newspaper attention, TV news attention, ad attention, and talking to others) were tested with hierarchical multiple regression equations in which demographics served as controls. Then, all possible paths between the intervening variables and the criterion variables (vote, political knowledge, and political cynicism) were also tested with regression equations.[1] Finally, all possible paths between the predictor variables and the criterion variables were tested with hierarchical multiple regression equations to ascertain direct effects.

Results

To test the predictors of the four intervening variables—attention to the issue in newspapers, TV news, and TV ads, and talking to others about the issue—a series of hierarchical multiple regression equations was used. The predictor variables were tested in separate equations in which the control variables were entered into the regression equation first. These results are shown in Table 1.

The control variables, on the whole, contributed little to the variance in the media and interpersonal communication variables. None of the control variables predicted newspaper attention. Age was a negative predictor of both attention to TV news and TV ads. Income was a negative predictor of attention to TV news and being white predicted talking to others.

Campaign involvement predicted newspaper attention, attention to TV ads, talking to others, but not attention to TV news. Issue importance predicted attention to TV news and talking to others, but not attention to newspapers or TV ads.

Relying on endorsements predicted only attention to TV ads. All of the beta weights for the predictor variables were positive.

Table 1. Hierarchical regression tests of three predictors of attention to newspapers, TV news, TV ads, and talking to others.

Predictor Variables	Newspaper attention	TV news attention	TV ad attention	Talking to others
Block 1: Controls				
Age		-.09*	-.13**	
Income		-.10*		
Race (white)				.13**
Controls R^2	*1.0%*	*2.33%**	*2.24%**	*3.35%**
Block 2: Endorsements			.09*	
Block 2: Campaign Involvement	.14**		.14**	.12**
Block 2: Issue importance		.19***		.19***

Note: Cell entries are standardized beta coefficients except for the R^2 values for the control equation (italics). Blank spaces note non-significant beta coefficients. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

The next set of tests was a series of regression equations (Table 2) wherein each of the four intervening variables was used to predict separately issue knowledge, political cynicism, and whether respondents voted for or against the concealed weapons proposition.

First, three separate regression equations were computed with newspaper attention as the predictor variable and with issue knowledge, cynicism, and vote as the criterion variables. Newspaper attention positively predicted issue knowledge and negatively predicted cynicism. Newspaper attention was not a significant predictor of vote. Second, three additional equations were computed with TV news attention as the predictor. TV news attention negatively predicted political cynicism, but did not predict issue knowledge or vote. TV ad attention equations were computed next. TV ad attention predicted none of the criterion variables. Finally, equations in which talk to others was used as the predictor were computed. As Table 2 shows, the strongest predictor variable was talking to others, which positively predicted issue knowledge, cynicism, and vote.

Table 2. Hierarchical regression tests of three predictors of attention to newspapers, TV news, TV ads, and talking to others

		Criterion variables	
Predictor Variables	Issue knowledge	Political Cynicism	How voted (for)
Newspaper attention	.13**	-.09*	
TV news attention		-.10*	
TV ads attention			
Talk to others	.19***	.11*	.13**
Total R^2	*6.1%*	*3.4**	*2.4%**

Note: Cell entries are standardized beta coefficients except for the R^2 values for the control equation (*italics*). Blank spaces note non-significant beta coefficients. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

The final set of equations examined the direct relationships between the three sets of predictor variables (endorsements, campaign involvement, and issue importance) on the three criterion variables (issue knowledge, cynicism, and vote). Significant direct relationships would weaken the argument that the media attention and talk variables intervene in this model.

A series of nine hierarchical regression equations was computed, three for each of the three predictor variables. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression tests of three predictors of issue knowledge, cynicism, and vote.

Predictor Variables	Issue knowledge	Political cynicism	Vote
Block 1:			
Controls		.16***	.10*
Age			.12**
Race (white)	-.17***		
Gender (female)	.09*		
Income	*4.9%****	*2.4%**	*3.4%***
Controls R^2			
Block 2:			
Endorsements			
Campaign involvement		*-.15****	*.14***
Issue Importance			
Incremental R^2	*0.7%*	*2.5%***	*2.0%**

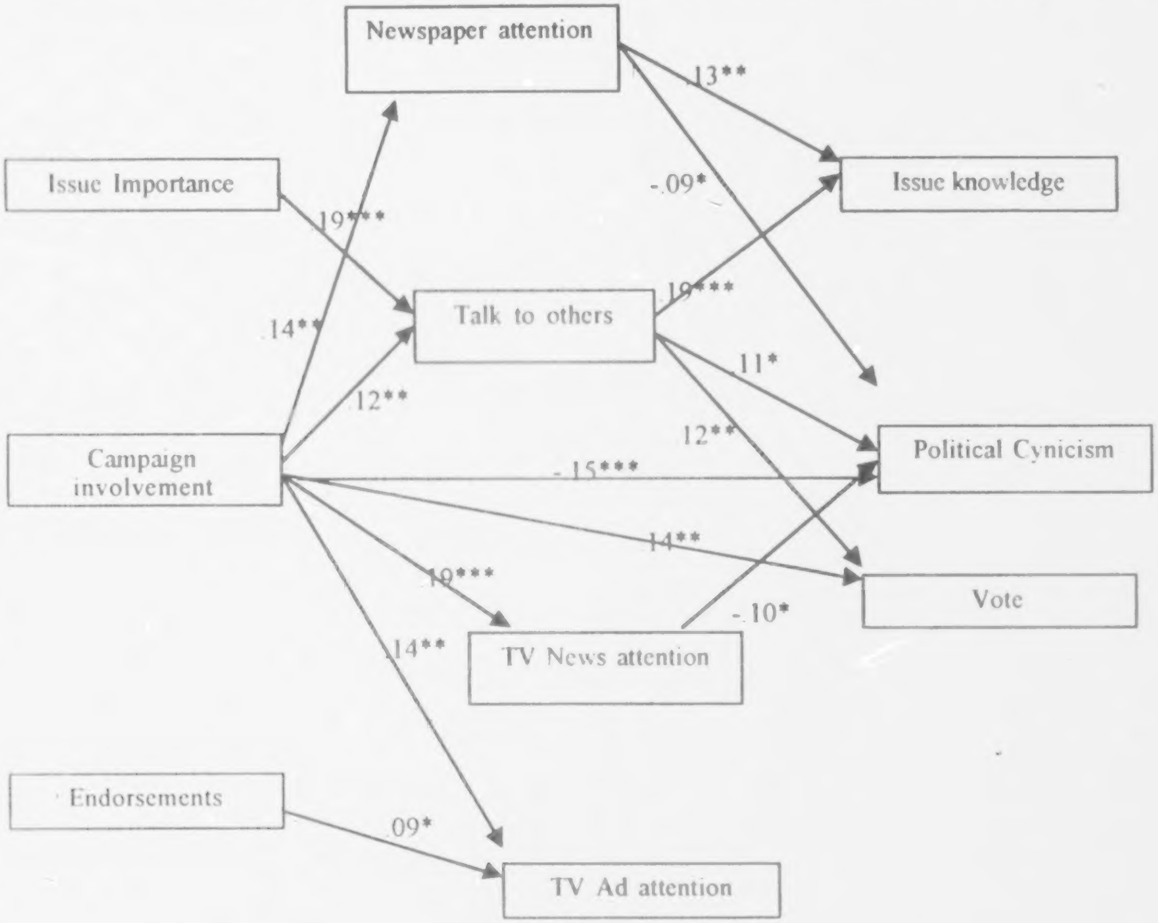
Note: Cell entries for the second blocks are R^2 change values (italics), otherwise standardized regression coefficients. Blanks spaces in Block 1 note non-significant beta coefficients. $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

Issue knowledge was negatively predicted by gender, such that male respondents scored higher on the concealed weapons knowledge test than females. Income also positively predicted issue knowledge. Age positively predicted cynicism and vote, such that older respondents were more cynical than younger respondents and were more likely to vote in favor of the concealed weapons issue. Race also positively predicted vote, such that white respondents reported being more politically cynical than non-whites. The control variables shared significant amounts of variance with each of the criterion variables.

Neither relying on endorsements in deciding how to vote nor rating the concealed weapons issue important predicted the criterion variables. Campaign involvement—the extent to which respondents thought the campaign was interesting and exciting—negatively predicted cynicism but positively predicted vote, such that those involved in the campaign were more likely to vote in favor of the concealed weapons issue. Thus, campaign involvement showed direct effects on vote and cynicism, whereas endorsements and issue importance did not.

The full path model is shown in Figure 1. The model shows that talking to others intervened between issue importance and all three criterion variables—issue knowledge, cynicism, and vote. Talking to others also linked campaign involvement to issue knowledge. Although talking to others linked campaign involvement to cynicism and to vote, campaign involvement was also directly linked to those variables. Similarly, newspaper attention seemed to intervene between campaign involvement and cynicism, but that interpretation is negated by the direct link between involvement and cynicism. The same is true for TV news attention. Respondents who relied on endorsements in deciding how to vote paid more attention to the TV ads, but ad attention was not directly related to any of the three criterion variables. Indirect paths exist between endorsements and each of the criterion variables through ad attention, given that ad attention is correlated with each of the other intervening communication variables: talk to others ($r = .23$, $p < .01$), TV news attention ($r = .44$, $p < .01$), and newspaper attention ($r = .13$, $p < .05$).

Figure 1. Path analysis model of antecedents and intervening variables of issue knowledge, political cynicism, and voting.


Newspaper attention
Issue Importance
Issue knowledge
Talk to others
Campaign involvement
Political Cynicism
Vote
TV News attention
Endorsements
TV Ad attention
.13**
-.09*
.19***
.19***
.14**
.11*
.12**
.12**
-.15***
.14**
.19***
-.10*
.14**
.09*

Note: Only the paths significant at the $p < .05$ level are shown and are indicated by standardized beta coefficients. The interitem correlations for the communication variables are not included in the model. See text for these correlations.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Discussion

This study examined the role of media and interpersonal political discussion as intervening variables between campaign orientation and issue knowledge, cynicism, and how people voted. Most notably, talking to others intervened between those who thought the issue was important and learning about the issue, being cynical about politics, and how people voted. As expected, campaign involvement was positively associated with the three media variables and talking to others, and also showed a direct relationship with how people voted and political cynicism. The relationship between campaign involvement and learning about the issue was mediated by talking to others and newspaper attention. Those voters who relied on endorsements to help them decide how to vote paid attention to TV ads, but did not pay attention to the other media, nor did they talk to other people about the issue. There was no path from TV ad attention to any of the three criterion variables, but indirect paths existed through the other two media attention measures and talking to others.

One methodological caveat in this study is one typical of all cross-sectional data. Although we made careful use of control demographics, the linkages we found for campaign orientation, communication variables, and political outcomes are simply correlational. But the model posited here is consistent with the conceptualizations of campaign communication and their relationships to cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral variables. Thus, a next important step is to examine how communication about an issue election directly influences such political outcomes.

The data also examined the nature of political orientation to the issue campaign. Because responses to issue importance, campaign involvement and endorsement reliance were uncorrelated with each other, these can be thought of as different ways voters oriented themselves to the campaign. Voters who rated the concealed weapons issue most important would be most likely to engage in systematic processing. These voters talked to other people about the issue, which, in turn, predicted how much they knew about the issue, their level of cynicism, and voting for the issue. Those would be most likely to engage in heuristic processing (i.e., those who most relied on endorsements) paid attention to TV ads only. Attention to TV ads did not predict any of the outcome variables, but was correlated with all of the other communication variables. Thus, a series of indirect paths from endorsements to the outcome variables suggest that ads served as a way to get these voters learning more about the issue and deciding how to vote. Those who thought the campaign was interesting and exciting didn't necessarily rate the issue as important, but these voters appeared to be most involved in the campaign media in addition to talking about the issue. These voters were the only group that showed direct relationships, such that they voted for the issue and were less politically cynical. Those most involved in the campaign tended to learn about the issue both from attending to the issue in newspapers and talking to others. Hence, it is these people seemingly most active with campaign communication behavior, not those who thought the issue was most important. This suggest a role for campaign media that has received little attention thus far: that campaign communication can involve voters who don't necessarily think the issues in the campaign are as important as other issues.

One limitation to the study is that it does not distinguish between the different levels of interpersonal influence. As Lenart (1994) pointed out, there are differences in how interpersonal influence functions when it can be defined as one-on-one communication, influence from a peer group or social network, or societal pressure mounted upon one by public opinion. As Roessler (1999) suggested in his study of interpersonal communication and agenda-setting, unless conversation content is analyzed, we will not know how the direction of association between the different types of media and interpersonal communication flowed. Roessler's research also suggests that the number of potential communication partners can influence the degree to which communication occurs. Another area of investigation could examine how interpersonal communication might influence the degree to which perceived public opinion would lead to the suppression of an individual's viewpoints in political conversations.

Notes

1. Although logistic regression is a suitable analysis technique when the criterion variables are dichotomous, we opted for standard regression. Regression is robust, appropriate, and useful when criterion variables are dichotomous (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Overall, 1980) and permits the direct comparison of standardized regression coefficients and R^2.

References

Berkowitz, D. & Pritchard, D. (1989). Political knowledge and communication resources. *Journalism Quarterly, 66,* 697-701.

Chaffee, S. H., & Hochheimer, J. L. (1985). The beginnings of political communication research in the United States: Origins of the Limited Effects Model. In E. M. Rogers & F. Balle (Eds.), *The Media Revolution in America and Western Europe.* (pp. 267-296). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Chaffee, S. H., & Schleuder, J. L. (1986). Measuring effects of attention to news media. *Human Communication Research, 13,* 76-107.

Chaffee, S. H., Zhao, X., & Leshner, G. (1994). Political knowledge and the election campaign of 1992. *Communication Research, 21,* 305-324.

Chaiken, S., Liberman, A., & Eagly, A.H. (1989). Heuristic and systematic information processing within and beyond persuasion context. In J. S. Uleman & J. A. Bargh (Eds.), *Unintended Thought* (pp. 212-252). New York: The Guilford Press.

Chaiken, S., & Maheswaran, D. (1994). Heuristic processing can bias systematic processing: Effects of source credibility, argument ambiguity, and task importance on attitude judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66,* 460-473.

Corrigan, D. (1999). NRA money influence police on concealed-weapons prop. *St. Louis Journalism Review, 29,* 215.

DeFleur, M.L., Davenport, L., Cronin, M., & DeFleur, M. (1992). Audience recall of news stories presented by newspaper, computer, television and radio. *Journalism Quarterly, 69,* 1010-1022.

Gimpel, J. G. (1998). Packing heat at the polls: Gun ownership, interest in group endorsements, and voting behavior in gubernatorial elections. *Social Science Quarterly, 79,* 635-647.

Greenberg, B. S. (1964). Person to person communication in the diffusion of news events. *Journalism Quarterly, 41,* 489-494.

Huckfeldt, R. & Sprague, J. (1987). Networks in context: The social flow of political information. *American Political Science Review, 81,* 1197-1216.

Lazarsfeld, P., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1944). *The people's choice.* New York: Duell, Sloan, & Pearce.

Lenart, S. (1994). *Shaping political attitudes: The impact of interpersonal communication and mass media.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Leshner, G. (1995, August). *Issue knowledge and media reliance.* Paper presented at the annual conference for the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication, Washington, D. C.

Lifting of concealed-guns ban on ballot. (1997, April 7). *Los Angeles Times* (NA), p. 4.

Lowery, S.A. & DeFleur, M. L. (1988). *Milestones in mass communication research.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Marshall, S. (1999, April 7). Missouri voters decide against lifting concealed weapons ban. [Online]. *USA Today,* pp 01A. Full-text: DIALOG File: All Databases in Today's News Item: 08662355.

Martinelli, K. A., & Chaffee, S. H. (1995). Measuring new-voter learning via three channels of political information. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 72,* 18-32.

McCombs, M., Einsiedel, E., & Weaver, D. (1991). *Contemporary public opinion: Issues and the news.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pinkleton, B. E. (1999). Individual motivations and information source relevance in political decision-making. *Mass Communication & Society, 2,* 65-80.

Pinkleton, B. E., Austin, E. W., & Fortman, K. K. (1998). Relationships of media use and political disaffection to political efficacy and voting behavior. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 42,* 34-49.

Robinson, J. P. (1972). Mass communication and information diffusion. In F. G. Kline & P. J. Tichenor (Eds.). *Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research.* Beverly Hills, CA: 1972.

Robinson, J. P., & Davis, D. K. (1990). Television news and informed public: An information-processing approach. *Journal of Communication, 40,* 106-119.

Robinson, J. P., & Levy, M. R. (1986). Interpersonal communication and news comprehension. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 50,* 160-175.

Roessler, P. (1999). The individual agenda-designing process: How interpersonal communication networks, and mass media shape the perception of political issues by individuals. *Communication Research, 26,* 666-700.

Stauffer, J., Frost, R., & Rybolt, W. (1981). Recall and learning from broadcast news: Is print better? *Journal of Broadcasting, 25,* 253-262.

Straits, B. C. (1991). Bringing strong ties back in interpersonal gateways to political information and influence. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 55,* 432-448.

Wicks, R.H., & Drew, D.G. (1991). Learning from news: Effects of message consistency and medium on recall and inference making. *Journal ism Quarterly, 68,* 155-164.

An "Improbable Leap": A Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Hillary Clinton's Transition from First Lady to Senate Candidate

Erica Scharrer*
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication
309 Machmer Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst, MA 01003-4815
Scharrer@comm.umass.edu
(413) 545-4765

Submitted to:
Mass Communication and Society Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Annual Conference
Phoenix, Arizona
August, 2000

*The author would like to thank Michael Morgan for his helpful suggestions and Danielle MacQuarrie and Chyng Sun for coding.

An "Improbable Leap": A Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Hillary Clinton's Transition from First Lady to Senate Candidate

Erica Scharrer*
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication
309 Machmer Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst, MA 01003-4815
Scharrer@comm.umass.edu
(413) 545-4765

Abstract

This study is primarily a quantitative content analysis of newspaper coverage of Hillary Clinton as she makes an unprecedented transition from first lady to senate candidate. 342 newspaper stories are analyzed to determine whether the press has responded to her adoption of non-traditional roles with a negative tone. 96 stories about Giuliani are used for comparison, and a qualitative analysis of negative statements appearing in news stories adds depth and dimension to the discussion of critical tone.

Key words

Content analysis, first lady, gender and politics, news media

Introduction and Theory

First Ladies—Changes and Challenges to the Role. Despite marked gains in numbers of women occupying powerful roles in the work force, Americans are "still ambivalent about a First Lady with too much clout" (Mower, 1992). This clout can be seen in the political activity of some First Ladies in recent decades, with Hillary Rodham Clinton at times exemplifying the ostensible evolution, tackling "hard" issues and being actively involved in decision-making and policy. However, these "new" roles have met with resistance. "The Presidency is an "I": Americans do not expect to elect a couple to run the government," according to Paul Costello, former press spokesperson for Rosalyn Carter and Kitty Dukakis (Mower, 1992). Skeptics and harsh critics abound concerning a first lady who oversteps her "wifely bounds" (Beasley, 1988). Mayo (1993) traces a history of criticism for powerful and political active first ladies, citing such non-media age predecessors as Nellie Taft, Florence Harding, and Edith Bolling Wilson, all of whom were both viewed as the closest adviser of the president and received harsh scrutiny for overstepping traditional boundaries.

Much of the past media coverage of first ladies focuses on their roles, with the assumption that there is a particular role to which they should conform. Ambivalence and even hostility results from challenges to traditional roles.

> First ladies are often caught in a dilemma that seems rooted in the ambiguity faced by modern American women who are expected to play at least two, sometimes conflicting, roles in American society: mother/homemaker and worker/bread winner. We want them to be active, but we often want them relegated to "soft" issues--those that directly affect people's lives. . .It is when we leave the area of soft issues for harder issues such as foreign policy, labor, banking and trade that the ambivalence about their roles appears (Benze, 1990).

Is Hillary Rodham Clinton being penalized by negative media coverage for being politically active? What is the press making of her unprecedented transition from first lady to candidate for the US Senate? This article marks an important evolution in the literature regarding first ladies by documenting newspaper coverage of the progression of Hillary Rodham Clinton from presidential wife to Senate candidate.

A review of existing studies regarding Clinton and other first ladies who have ventured into the realm of political activity suggests news coverage of Clinton's candidacy may be negative or contentious in tone. Templin (1999) has documented overt sexism indicative of apparent discomfort with non-stereotypical roles of Clinton in political cartoons, a backlash against the first lady's political and professional ventures. Winfield (1994) suggests the press expects stereotypical "political wife" standards of the first lady, and when she does not conform to these standards, the media may react negatively. Winfield (1997) also documents both White House initiatives to address and journalistic challenges to cover the fluid and diverse roles Clinton has taken on. Gardetto (1997) analyzed pre-election press coverage of Clinton in 1992 and discovered she was framed as a "new woman" struggling with a public versus private role and operating both for and against a "social imaginary" notion of family. Brown (1997) suggests Clinton has received negative coverage because she is multifaceted and does not fit neatly into simplified media routines regarding roles of first ladies.

As the media have highlighted new roles and responsibilities, challenges to the traditional role have been accompanied by implicit criticism and explicit scrutiny. Scharrer and Bissell (in press) examined newspaper and news magazine coverage of Clinton, Barbara Bush, and Nancy Reagan. They found ventures of each into the realm of political activity were often covered prominently and in a negative tone, whereas stories on "soft news" aspects of their roles were more often positive in tone and less prominently displayed. This tendency supports the notion that first ladies have a predetermined, traditional role that is expected of them due to their sex and stereotypical notions assigned according to gender. The position as public wife and mother relegate first ladies to family and private sphere roles that are witnessed by the American public.

Gender and Politics. As Hillary Rodham Clinton begins her run for a New York Senate seat, she makes an historical transition from first lady to political candidate. In her present status as candidate, therefore, new rules apply to perceptions of her role. Clinton moves out of the shackles assigned to first ladies and into a somewhat more lenient, though still gender-typed, set of guidelines for female politicians.

Political strategy and coverage of politics can differ according to the public's response based on the sex of the candidate. Deaux and Lewis (1984) found women were perceived as dealing with the elderly better because women were stereotyped as compassionate, whereas men were believed to be better at dealing with military issues because men were stereotyped as tougher and more aggressive. Huddy and Terkildsen (1992) found that stereotypical assumptions about females' sensitivity and warmth were directly translated into assumptions about their greater competence in handling issues like education, health care, and poverty. In a subsequent study, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) also found that voters perceived female candidates as less competent to handle the military, war, and the economy. Riggle, Miller, Shields, and Johnson (1997) suggest that female politicians may face attributional biases not only in election situations but also in evaluations of actual job performances.

The Impact of News Decisions on Coverage: Framing. Entman (1993) defines framing as selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a text to promote a problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or problem treatment. By the placement or repetition of certain bits of information, some text can become more salient to audiences. By the placement or repetition of certain bits of information, some text can become more salient to audiences. Iyengar and Kinder (1983) have documented priming effects in which audience members come to evaluate public officials according to news frames.

A potential frame of Clinton is one that emphasizes a stereotypical or traditionally-expected gender role. Conversely, another frame may emphasize politically active or policy and issue-driven actions and roles. Other news stories may combine these and other frames. These are media frames because they involve decisions on the part of news gatherers regarding what aspects of an event to cover, how much attention to give it, what facets should be emphasized, and what angle to take in covering the story.

One may argue that the news media are merely covering what is occurring and it is the events themselves that dictate whether the frame will show political activity or not. However, it is also possible to pick and choose certain aspects of the same event to give it either a politically active or a traditional angle. If Clinton is meeting with committee members to discuss a social initiative, for example, the story could focus on her arrival, waving to the crowd, or what she wore, all traditional, non-politically active frames. On the other hand, the same event could instead depict her addressing a table of Congress people, her actively participating in policy discussions, or her expressing her own points of view rather than those of the president. Framing, therefore, is less what is covered but rather how it is described and what aspects of it are emphasized.

The Impact of News Decisions on Coverage: Media Sociology. Many decisions are made in the process of gathering news, from covering of events, to finding sources, to giving audiences a version of the occurrences related to a particular event. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) report that editors predict what an audience will find appealing or important, thus making a news judgment based on agreed-upon news values such as prominence, proximity, timeliness, conflict, or unusualness. By making decisions based on news values, news personnel often make consistent story or news selections (Schneider, 1985). Each time a decision is made about what to cover, how to cover it, or who to interview or photograph, an interpretation of "reality" is being advanced. The decision is sometimes one made by an individual but is often the result of an industry-wide socialization process in determining how to recognize and how to cover news (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978).

Media gatekeepers may themselves believe or may judge their audience members to believe that female politicians should conform to stereotypical roles. If this is the case, if Clinton is framed as politically active, negativity in coverage could accompany these roles. In the act of gatekeeping—selecting information and potential news items as "in" or "out"—and creating frames—emphasizing and highlighting specific aspects of a person, event, or issue—public perceptions may be influenced. When coverage is negative in tone, there is the potential for the favorability of the public's opinion to diminish as well.

Front-Runner Effect and Watchdog Function. Members of the news media presumably feel it is their duty to protect the interests of the public by ensuring that candidates are capable and their behaviors and positions warrant a vote of confidence by the public. The "watchdog function" of the media involves the use of news investigation and reporting to provide a check on the power of politicians in the interest of the public. Further, Robinson and Sheehan (1983) have found that it is particularly those candidates who have a good chance of winning the election, the frontrunners, who are held up to intense scrutiny by the media. The "front-runner effect," then, renders the leading candidate(s) for an elected office susceptible to more media attention concerning potential foibles and skeletons in the closet that achieves both a sense of protecting the public and a story that is sure to sell newspapers or attract television audiences (Comstock & Scharrer, 1999).

Hypotheses and Theoretical Linkages. This study examines the evolution of newspaper coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton's decision to run for Senate in New York State following the end of Bill Clinton's term in office. It traces an historically significant phenomenon, the juxtaposition of roles that occurs when a current first lady is also a high-profile candidate campaigning for office. It predicts that coverage will change in tone and prominence to accompany either media frames of political activity typical of political candidates or more traditional, stereotypical roles associated with being first lady. It investigates changes in coverage over time, as the front-runner effect is likely to be engaged. Finally, it makes comparisons with the coverage of Clinton's opponent in the race, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

H1: The more politically active Clinton is framed in newspaper content, the more negative the tone of the story.
H2: Those stories about Clinton that focus on the Senate race are more likely to be negative than those stories about Clinton that focus on other topics.
H3: The higher the degree of certainty that Clinton will run for office, the more negative the newspaper coverage.

Media frames are defined here as those implicit messages in media content that result from the ways in which news personnel construct content. The independent variable in the first hypothesis is the degree to which Clinton is shown to be politically active in the text of the story. The concept is theoretically defined as the extent to which she is involved in "hard news" stories, provides information on political issues, or actively participates in decision-making, policy-oriented events, or campaign-related activities. Coders will operationalize the concept by noting whether each news item involving Clinton revolves around politically active roles such as these (usually occurring in stories featuring "hard news") or is centered on non-politically active roles. Examples of non-politically active roles include escorting the president, decorating the White House, entertaining foreign diplomats, or being the subject of a fashion-oriented piece (usually occurring in stories featuring "soft news"). For instance, focus on health care decision-making is a hard issue and signifies political activity whereas emphasis in the news story on hosting the wife of the Russian president is a soft, non-politically active news item. Items can receive a score of "both" if both types of frames exist.

The dependent variable in the first hypothesis is negativity in coverage. The theoretical definition for the concept is the tone of the story and the degree to which it is favorable or unfavorable, with negativity indicating the subject is portrayed in an unflattering light. The operational definition is the coded score for each newspaper story upon reading the text in full on a 5-point scale from "very negative" to "very positive." The middle score of 3 is labeled "neutral" and includes stories that contain no evaluative statements or interpretive phrases that could be construed as positive or negative as well as stories that contain approximately equal amounts of negative and positive commentary. In the second hypothesis, Senate race stories are separated from all others and the hypothesis suggests those stories addressing the topic of the race will be more negative in tone than the others, since the race comprises the height of political activity.

In order to balance the necessary subjectivity of the judgment of positive or negative tone, the concept of tone will be further explored in three ways. First, coders will also count the numbers of negative statements made about the subject in the story. Negative statements are defined as any phrase or sentence that portrays the subject in an unflattering light. Second, for each negative statement, coders will note the source of the negative comments (using the categories: opponent, opponent's staff, other politicians or former politicians, analysts/experts, leaders of the community or activists, ordinary citizens, journalists and authors, the journalist who is the author of the story at hand, and other). Those categories will be used to compute a count of the number of negative statements found in each story. Finally, the coders will make note of what is being criticized, or the aspect of the subject of the negative statement. The categories used for this measure will be: likelihood of winning, carpetbagging, elitism (rich; private schools; Westchester residence), feminism or being non-traditional (too assertive, too strong, too "masculine"), issue or platform criticism, criticism regarding Bill Clinton and the Lewinsky scandal, physical appearance, image characteristics (integrity, trust, compassion, intelligence, etc.), campaign criticisms (such as attack ads, poor performance in a speech, gaffe at a public appearance), and other.

The hypotheses are based on earlier findings and analyses that suggest as first ladies surpass the typical boundaries of their roles, they may meet with some resistance from the media and the public (Benze, 1990; Brown, 1997; Gardetto, 1997; Scharrer & Bissell, in press). It is also likely that these relatively new ways of framing the politically active first lady may be negative due to the gatekeeping and editorial decisions of media personnel who are functioning as watchdogs keeping the new-found power in check (Robinson & Sheehan, 1983). Media personnel may either believe themselves or perceive their audience to believe that political activity on the part of non-elected first ladies is unwelcome and may incorporate a negative tone as a means of appealing to this audience (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). H2 and H3 are based on the notion that the Senate race is one example of a high-profile, important, politically active story. Therefore, the pattern we predict for H1 should also occur in the more specific scenario that H2 provides. Furthermore, as the idea of Clinton's candidacy evolves from a possibility to a certainty, one would expect the watchdog notion—as well as any negative views regarding women in general or Clinton specifically as a potential holder of public office—should become solidified and therefore dictate tone of coverage.

H4: The more politically active Clinton is framed in newspaper content, the more prominent the coverage will be.
H5: Those stories about Clinton that focus on the Senate race are more likely to be prominent than those stories about Clinton that focus on other topics.
H6: The more certain of running for the Senate office Clinton is reported to be, the more prominent the newspaper coverage.

Again, the independent variable is degree of political activity in which the First Lady is framed in newspaper content. The dependent measure in H4 is prominence of newspaper coverage. The theoretical definition of prominence involves the placement and treatment of the news story within the newspaper. The more prominent the story, the more noticeable and conspicuous its presence, and the more it can be assumed that the news gatherers deemed it important. Prominence is operationally defined using three separate variables: placement within the newspaper (front page or inside page), length of the story, and whether the First Lady was a primary or secondary actor in the story.

The theoretical linkage between the two variables is based on news values and judgments of newsworthiness. Because politically active media frames for first ladies are still somewhat novel, some may even say "deviant" since they depart from traditional norms, those stories in which Clinton is involved in political or policy-related issues may be judged more newsworthy and therefore displayed more prominently (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). It is typical editorial practice to give more attention to news items involving hard issues than those pieces that are framed as feature stories, "fluff" items, or soft news (Scott & Gobetz, 1992). Thus, gatekeepers in editorial positions make decisions based in large part on professional, widely accepted notions of newsworthiness (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978) which would place stories in which Clinton is framed as being politically involved in more conspicuous and important positions.

H5 and H6, similar to H2 and H3 above, are more specific cases in which to examine this relationship. It is predicted that stories about the Senate race will be more prominent than stories about other issues and topics. It is also predicted that the degree of certainty in whether Clinton will run will predict prominence, with the initial "rumors" receiving little attention and the prominence escalating as certainty increases. The theoretical basis for the predictions includes the watchdog function of the press as well as their tendency to focus on those with a good chance of winning the election (Halpern, 1996; Robinson & Sheehan, 1983; Ross, 1992). It also draws upon news value criteria for decision-making in deciding what to cover and how much play to give to an item (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Since Clinton is an extremely prominent person, her participation in the Senate race is presumably quite newsworthy.

H7: The closer the date of the news story to the Senate election, the more negative the newspaper coverage of Clinton will be for politically active news frames.

The independent variable is how recent the story is in relation to Election Day. The variable is operationally defined by merely noting the date on which the story was published. The dependent variable is tone of the story and will be measured the same as above. The two variables are theoretically linked by the principle of the front-runner effect (Robinson & Sheehan, 1983) as well as the practices of gatekeeping and judging news values (Gans, 1979; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978; White, 1950). Because only two candidates are receiving press attention for the race, and of them Clinton enjoys more name recognition and fame nationwide, we can assume she will be sufficiently viable for the watchdog function to take effect, even if she is not technically the frontrunner at any given time. Gatekeepers, therefore, will be motivated by an industry-wide tendency to scrutinize the activities of a viable candidate to an important elected office and this will theoretically motivate news gathering and reporting practices.

RQ1: Will New York newspapers use a more negative tone in covering the candidates than other newspapers?

RQ2: Will newspaper coverage of Clinton be significantly different in tone than coverage of Rudolph Giuliani?

The first research question examines a possible relationship between where the newspaper is from and the amount of negativity in coverage of the race. We might expect New York-area newspapers to adopt a stronger watchdog tone, since it is in New York that one of the candidates will presumably take office (Robinson & Sheehan, 1983). However, in an era of widespread media conglomeration, many stories that are not local for any individual newspaper are picked up either from other newspapers or from the news wire. Furthermore, the prominence of Clinton's position and the widespread, nationwide negativity she has faced in past press coverage may render any anticipated differences in tone of stories run in New York and other newspapers insignificant.

The second research question derives from the literature lending mixed support to the notion of differing coverage and different expectations for male and female candidates for office (Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1992, 1993; Riggle, Miller, Shields, & Johnson, 1997). Furthermore, based on Clinton's history of negative media attention and reportedly antipathetic relationship with the news media (Bennetts, 1994; Scharrer & Bissell, in press; Sherrill, 1994; Winfield, 1997), due in part to activities that fly in the face of expected gender roles, one might expect harsh media treatment to continue. Giuliani, however, is also not historically a media favorite.

In order to make this comparison, we will examine newspaper coverage of Giuliani's candidacy, as well, measuring the tone of the coverage he receives in the same manner as above. In addition to the overall measure for tone, the source of the criticism will be noted using the same categories described above, and a count of all stories containing negative statements will be calculated. Some of the categories for the subject of the criticism variable for Giuliani will be the same as for Clinton—issues and platform, image characteristics, campaign-related criticism, appearance, likelihood of winning, and other. Other categories are unique to Giuliani, including record as New York City mayor and the controversy surrounding the art museum in Brooklyn.

Method

Sampling Decisions. This study is a content analysis of a systematic sample of news stories on Hillary Rodham Clinton at the time when she was considering and then deciding to enter the Senate race, using coverage of Giuliani as a means of comparison. To arrive at news stories, the search term "Hillary (Rodham) Clinton" was entered for the time period of 10/1/99 to 2/6/00. (The search was performed four different times for each month, to limit the number of stories to fit the Lexis Nexis cut-off for each search term.) A systematic sample with a random start was chosen from the list of sources displayed by the database. Every 4th story was selected to reach the ultimate sample size of 342 news stories on Clinton.

Since this study is concerned with news coverage during the transition from first lady to Senate candidate, the times were chosen to encompass a four-month period in which speculation about the race mounted and then ended and certainty was reached. The time period also includes 11/24/99, on which Clinton said unofficially that she would run, and ends on 2/6/00, the date of her official announcement.

To gather stories about Rudy Giuliani, Clinton's opponent for the Senate seat, a separate search was conducted. The time period chosen for Giuliani and the numbers of stories comprising the sample were considerably smaller than for Clinton, since she is the central focus of the study. Therefore, the search term "Rudolph OR Rudy AND Giuliani" was entered in the Lexis Nexis database for the two-month period of 11/1/99 to 1/1/00. Every 10th story was selected, resulting in a systematic sample of 96 stories about Giuliani which serve as a means of comparison with stories about Clinton.

All domestic newspapers that comprise the Lexis-Nexis database were included in the content analysis. This includes many of the largest circulating newspapers as well as medium-sized newspapers and allows for diversity in terms of size of newspaper and region of the country (see appendix for complete list). If the systematic process lighted on an international newspaper, the domestic newspaper immediately following this was chosen. Only news items were included in the analysis. Editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor were also discarded if the systematic approach selected them, and the news article that followed was again selected. The decision to limit the analysis to news articles only was made to accurately reflect the news gathering and news media sociology theoretical basis from which the study draws.

A second coder was used for 20% of the sample. The additional coder was given a training session in which samples of articles were shown and the author explained how to apply the code book definitions to the content. The additional coder was not informed of the hypotheses and research questions so that evaluations would not be colored by what the author had expected to find. The results for intercoder agreement using Holsti's formula averaged .88 and ranged from .83 to .94.

Defining and Measuring Variables. Coders noted the source of the news story, the date, its length, the presence or absence of visuals, and the position within the newspaper by using the information regarding those variables that Lexis Nexis provides at the beginning of the article. Coders also noted the subject of the story in a word or phrase by reading the story to determine what it was about (e.g., Whitewater, giving a dinner, visiting upstate NY to campaign, etc.). Stories about the Senate race—including those that merely mentioned the race—were given a separate code than stories in which the race was not mentioned at all. Coders also documented whether Clinton was a major character in the story (the entire story is about her and references to her appear consistently throughout) or was a minor character (she is mentioned anywhere from once to two or three times periodically in the article). In stories about Giuliani if Clinton was not mentioned at all, this, too, was noted.

A series of additional variables coded were more latent in nature. First, coders noted whether the activity or angle about which Clinton was covered in the story was politically active or not. Thus, stories about issue positions, poll results, campaign visits, policy discussions, etc. were coded as politically active. Stories about such traditional first lady roles as escort, entertainer, home decorator, fashion plate, charitable works advocate, etc. were coded as non-politically active. Therefore, stories in which Clinton visits a hospital were coded as politically active if it was under the heading of campaigning but non-politically active if it appeared to be under the charitable role common to a first lady. Finally, neutral scores were appointed to stories where politically active and non-politically active roles were given approximately equal weight.

Coders were also asked to determine the degree of certainty regarding whether the story indicated if Clinton would, indeed, run for the Senate position, using 1 = story indicates unequivocally that she will NOT run, 2 = story indicates it is possible that she will run but does not suggest certainty, and 3 = story indicates it is probable she will run, and 4 = story indicates it is absolutely certain that Clinton will run. There was also an option of "not applicable" if Clinton is not mentioned in the article at all.

Another key variable in the analysis was the tone of the story. Coders were asked to assign a score for the tone with which Clinton was discussed as well as a score for the tone with which Giuliani was discussed. If one of the two were not present in the story, coders noted the item was "not applicable." After reading the story in full, coders were asked to assign the tone of the story a 1 if Clinton/Giuliani was discussed in a very negative manner, with clear and blatant words used to connote a sense of disapproval or disregard, with accusations or unflattering comments, or with any words or phrases that portrayed the subject in a bad light throughout the story. The article was assigned a 2 if there was an indication of slight negativity, as defined above, somewhere in the story and a 3 if there was no indication of either a positive or a negative tone. The article rated a 5 if there were clear and blatant words used to connote a positive tone, praise, approval, flattery, or any frame or angle that portrayed the subject in a good light throughout the story. A score of 4 was given to a less obvious or less consistent type of positive tone.

In addition to this measure, the concept of tone was operationalized for both Clinton and Guiliani with numbers of negative statements counted, source of criticism for each statement noted, and the subject of each negative statement categorized. Thus, each negative statement was tallied and information on which aspect of the subject was criticized and who was doing the criticizing were documented using the categories outlined in the theoretical linkages section above. Finally, coders were asked to write down any quotes from news articles that they thought illustrated well the tone of the story. This practice provides an in-depth, qualitative aspect of coverage that added richness of meaning to the measures of negativity that merely noting the score prevents.

Results

Descriptive Statistics. The sample contained 29 different newspapers[1], with the greatest number of stories by far printed in either the New York Daily News (29.5%) or the New York Times (22.1%). The next highest percentage of stories were located in the Washington Post, but these accounted for only 5.7% of all the stories in the sample.

The subject of the story—either Clinton or Giuliani—was coded as politically active in 71.7% of stories, as non-politically active in 13.9%, and as both in 14.4%. The subject was the primary character in 55% of the stories and mentioned as a minor or peripheral character in the remaining 45%. The majority of the stories in the sample were located on an inside page in the first section of the newspaper (64.6%), with 20.1% located on an inside page in other sections, 8.7% on the front page in the first section, and 6.6% on the front page of other sections.

Of the 372 news stories on Hillary Clinton, 56.2% had a neutral tone, 23.4% were coded as negative and 7.3% were coded as very negative. Only 0.8% of stories on Clinton were coded as very positive and 12.4% were coded as positive. The mean tone for Clinton was a 2.76 (SD = .79), with 1 being very negative and 5 being very positive. The distribution of scores for tone of the 96 stories on Rudy Giuliani was relatively similar. In most (49.0%), the tone was neutral. The second highest percentage was, once again, for negative stories (30.1%), and very negative stories accounted for 4.2% of the sample. 15.1% of Giuliani stories were coded as positive and 1.5% were coded as very positive. The mean tone for Giuliani was 2.79 (SD = .80), again, with 1 being very negative and 5 very positive. For Clinton and Giuliani together, there were an average of 1.39 negative statements per story (SD = 2.16).

For both, the bulk of the stories indicated that their candidacy was probable (40.6%), while a full 35.2% of stories did not address the certainty of the candidacy at all. For 21.5%, candidacy was certain, and for 2.7% it was possible rather than probable. About two-thirds (65.1%) of stories in the sample directly mentioned the Senate race while the remaining third (34.9%) were not about the race. The dates of the stories in the sample by month were 20.3% in October, 1999, 28.1% in November, 1999, 31.3% in December, 1999, 17.6% in January, 2000, and 2.7% in February, 2000. The average length of the articles in the sample was about 593 words, though the large standard deviation (383.21) indicates much variability in length.

Table 1 shows the distribution of results for the negative statements contained in the articles in the sample. For all stories, then for Clinton and Giuliani separately, what was criticized and who did the criticizing was coded. The table shows that the most common topics for negative statements for Clinton were her campaign (34.5%), issues (33.9%), and the allegation of carpet bagging (15.5%). The most frequent critics of Clinton were the reporters writing the story analyzed (38.3%), Giuliani himself (19.9%), and Giuliani's staff (19.6%). For Giuliani, the most common topics for negative statements were issues (92.7%), image (43.8%), and his campaign (16.7%). The most frequent critics were community leaders and activists (34.4%), Clinton's staff (33.3%), and other politicians (26.0%).

Table 1 about here

Hypothesis Tests. Hypothesis 1, predicting that stories covering politically active ventures of Clinton will have a more negative tone compared to stories covering a non-politically active Clinton role, was supported (see Table 2). The mean tone for her politically active stories was 2.61 (SD = .78) and for her non-politically active stories it was 3.30 (SD = .72). As would be logically expected, the tone for mixed stories was in the middle of these two results, with a mean of 2.85 (SD = .70). An ANOVA test shows differences between these means are statistically significant (F = 19.95, p <.001). Additional support for the hypothesis is gained in another ANOVA test examining the numbers of negative statements rather than the coded overall tone of the story. Politically active stories had an average of 1.63 negative statements (SD = 2.53), non-politically active stories had an average of 0.41 negative statements (SD = 1.05), and mixed stories had an average of 1.18 negative statements (SD = 1.81; F = 7.36, p = .001).

Hypothesis 2, predicting that Clinton stories about the Senate race would be more negative in tone than Clinton stories about other topics, was also supported (see Table 2). The mean tone of the stories about the Senate race was 2.65 (SD = .80) while the mean tone for non-Senate stories was 3.15 (SD = .67; F = 13.72, p <.001). The average number of negative statements in Senate race stories was 1.68 (SD = 2.47) while non-Senate stories had an average of 0.33 negative statements (SD = .99; F = 42.83, p<.001).

Hypothesis 3, which predicted that the more certain Clinton will run for Senate, the more negative the tone, was not supported in that the results were arrayed in the direction predicted but differences were not large enough for statistical significance (see Table 2). With candidacy merely a possibility for Clinton, there were an average of .36 negative statements and a tone of 2.9. With candidacy deemed probable in the news article, there were more negative statements (mean of 1.71) and a less favorable tone (2.68). Finally, with candidacy a certainly in the article, again the number of negative statements rose (mean of 1.78) and the tone was even less favorable (2.60). However, in neither case—measuring negative statements (F = 1.60, p = .20) or overall tone (F = .87, p = .42)—were the differences statistically significant.

The next series of hypotheses predicted differences in prominence for politically active stories, Senate race stories, and stories in which candidacy is more certain for Clinton. Prominence was measured with three different variables, length of the article, position in the newspaper, and whether Clinton was a primary or secondary character in the article. Results are less consistent for this series of hypotheses, with only limited support attained for them collectively (see Table 2).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that politically active stories would be displayed more prominently in the newspaper than non-politically active stories about Clinton. However, differences in length for politically active (mean = 591.02 words, SD = 337.82), non-politically active (mean = 604.08 words, SD = 398.19), and mixed (mean = 639.66, SD= 547.34) stories were very small and not statistically significant (F = .37, ns; Table 2).

Table 2 about here

There was also no support for the second indicator of prominence, position within the newspaper. A cross-tabulation table shows no pattern in which politically active stories appear more frequently in the more prominent front page or first section positions, and the chi square results is not statistically significant (see Table 3). The last indicator of prominence, primary versus secondary character, was displayed in the predicted direction and did achieve statistical significance (see Table 3). When Clinton was a politically active, she was more often a primary character, and when she was not politically active she was more often a secondary character in newspaper coverage ($\chi^2 = 13.0$, Cramer's V = .20, p = .002).

Table 3 about here

A similar pattern occurs for Hypothesis 5 in that length and position were not related to whether the story was about the Senate, but the primary versus secondary character indicator of prominence was. Differences in length for Senate stories and other stories were small, in the opposite direction predicted, and not statistically significant (see Table 2). No discernible patterns emerged for position in the newspaper for Senate compared to other stories (see Table 3). However, in articles about the Senate race, Clinton was more often a primary character while in articles about other topics, Clinton was more often secondary (see Table 3, $\chi^2 = 20.40$, Cramer's V = .24, $p < .001$).

All three indicators of prominence show relationships with degree of certainty regarding candidacy (Hypothesis 6) which approach but do not achieve statistical significance. When candidacy is merely a possibility, articles have an average length of 416.18 words (SD = 211.63). When candidacy is a probable likelihood, the average length increases to 585.64 words (SD = 344.47). When candidacy is a certainly, the average length increases once again to 658.00 words (SD = 436.42). However, perhaps due to the high degree of variability in scores, the differences fail to achieve conventional standards for statistical significance (see Table 2, F = 2.49, $p = .085$). Similarly, stories with greater certainty are more often found on the front page or in the first section compared to stories with less certainty (see Table 3). However, this result also approaches but does not reach conventional standards for statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 11.57$, Cramer's V = .15, $p = .072$). In much the same fashion, the third indicator of prominence, whether Clinton was a primary or secondary character, receives only limited support (see Table 3). Though results were displayed in the direction anticipated, with Clinton a secondary character most often when candidacy is only possible and a primary character most often when candidacy is either probable or certain, results only approach statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 5.58$, Cramer's V = .15, $p = .062$).

Hypothesis 7 predicted that stories appearing in the newspaper at a later date, one closer to the election, would be more negative in tone. This hypothesis was not supported by these data. When the stories about Clinton are plotted by date and tone of story, no predicted pattern of increased negativity emerges (see Figure 1). When dates are categorized by month and an ANOVA is run, differences between the means are non-linear and not statistically significant (F = .50, ns). We see from the figure that mid-November, 1999 was the time of the lowest score for tone.

Figure 1 about here

Research Questions. The first research question addressed the issue of whether New York newspapers would incorporate more negativity in coverage of the candidates for New York Senate compared to newspapers from other states. Results suggest this is not the case (see Table 4). The tone for Clinton was very similar in New York newspapers (mean = 2.73, SD = .72) and non-New York newspapers (mean = 2.79, SD = .85; F = 1.83, ns). The tone for Giuliani was also very similar in New York newspapers (mean = 2.78, SD = .82) and non-New York newspapers (mean = 2.83, SD = .77, F = 1.23, ns). Finally, for both Clinton and Giuliani, the number of negative statements in New York newspaper coverage (mean = 1.5, SD = 1.91) compared to non-New York newspapers (mean = 1.28, SD = 2.40) was not statistically significant (F = .33, ns).

Table 4 about here

The second research question investigated the issue of whether tone of coverage of Clinton would be significantly different from tone of coverage of Giuliani. Results were mixed (see Table 5). Giuliani was the subject of a greater number of negative statements than Clinton (mean = 1.63 for RG, SD = 1.77 compared to mean = 1.33 for HC, SD = 2.26), but the difference was not statistically significant (F = .81, ns). However, the overall tone of the stories about Clinton was significantly lower than that for Giuliani (mean = 2.61, SD = .81 for HC, mean = 2.82, SD = .76 for RG, t = -2.68, p <.01). Results also show that though Giuliani received the greater number of negative statements on average, Clinton was more often the subject of multiple negative statements compared to Giuliani. The greatest number of negative statements per story about Giuliani was 4, whereas the greatest number of negative statements per story about

Clinton was 14. Clinton received from 4 to 6 negative statements in a total of 14 stories while Giuliani had that many negative statements in only 1 story. Similarly, in 4 stories, Clinton was the subject of 7 or more negative statements, whereas Giuliani was never the subject of so many negative statements. Therefore, there is some support for the notion that Clinton is receiving less favorable newspaper coverage than Giuliani.

Table 5 about here

Analysis of Negative Statements. The final portion of this study looked for patterns and examples of how, exactly, negativity was conveyed in newspaper coverage of Clinton's run for the Senate. A selection of quotes from each major area of criticism was drawn to demonstrate the type of negative statements found in the newspaper stories in this sample. As mentioned above, the most frequent topic of criticism for Hillary Clinton in coverage from October, 1999 to her formal decision to run for Senate on February 6, 2000 critiqued the way she was conducting her preliminary campaign and her political strategies. The most common themes of criticism in this category had to do with using federal funds to travel for campaigning, pandering to voting segments such as Jewish or Hispanic voters, and being unfamiliar with New York politics.

> *Opponent Rudy Giuliani, quoted in the New York Times on 2/4/00, regarding federal funds used for trip costs, "I'd like that deal, not only for my campaign but for my vacation. I mean, if you can get that deal for you and your family, take it, because Disneyland, here I come."*
>
> *Ordinary citizen Kris Kraus, a Republican from Buffalo, quoted in the Buffalo News on 12/1/99, "What does she know about New York? She's just being opportunistic because (Daniel Patrick) Moynihan is quitting. She doesn't know anything about us, and then she goes and puts a Yankees cap on. She should go back to Arkansas."*
>
> *Reporter Adam Nagourney in the New York Times on 11/24/99, "Party leaders also expressed concern about her political competence in what is expected to be a difficult contest."*

The second most frequent facet of criticism for Clinton involved her stances on issues. The newspapers in the sample reported frequently on several political missteps of the Clinton campaign, such as embracing Suha Arafat after she made inflammatory remarks about Israel as well as her reaction to Giuliani's tough stance on homeless people accused of crimes. Other comments focused on past health care issues and remarks made concerning Palestinian statehood.

Reporters Tsadok Yecheskeli, Thomas M. Defrank, and William Goldschlag in the New York Daily News on 11/13/99, "Hillary Rodham Clinton tried yesterday to clean up the political mess from her disastrous appearance with Yasser Arafat's wife."

Opponent Rudy Giuliani, quoted in the New York Times on 12/2/99, "There is nothing gained in ignoring people living on the streets and romanticizing homelessness into some issue that it really isn't."

Opponent Rudy Giuliani, quoted in the New York Daily News on 11/13/99, regarding the Suha Arafat incident, "To embrace her afterward almost sounds like an agreement with it. Had I been in a situation like that, I would have objected to it."

Reporter Larry Kaplow in the Atlanta Journal Constitution on 11/12/99, regarding Clinton's prior comments supporting a Palestinian state, "It is an issue that has cast a shadow over Clinton's likely bid for a United States Senate seat from New York."

The third most frequent source of criticism for Clinton was about her "carpet bagger" status in that she is not from New York State.

Opponent Rudy Giuliani, quoted in the New York Daily News on 12/2/99, "I am considering a new requirement for candidates. You have to demonstrate that you can get from LaGuardia Airport to your house and that you have to know the way by yourself."

Talk show host David Letterman, quoted in the San Diego Union Tribune on 11/21/99, "It was so windy in New York today that Hillary Clinton was blown back to her home state."

An unnamed "party activist" quoted in the New York Daily News on 11/28/99, "I mean, for God's sake, she's not even a resident. I think the press should start putting 'D-No Place' after her name."

In 13% of all negative statements, doubts and concerns about the anticipated success of the Clinton campaign were voiced, questioning its legitimacy. Many of these stories and negative statements allude to poll results showing areas of deficit in support for the Clinton campaign.

Reporter Andrew Miga in the Boston Herald on 11/22/99, "New Yorkers have a blunt two-word message for Hillary Rodham Clinton and her fumbling Senate campaign: Don't bother."

Reporter Bill Wippert in the Buffalo News on 12/1/99, "At this point, the nays have it. Clinton trailed near-certain opponent Rudy Giuliani by 11 points in a recent poll. It wasn't just the numbers that were distressing. More people had unfavorable than favorable feelings about her, and one of every three said they'd vote for Giuliani just to vote against her."

Reporter Steve Goldstein in the Houston Chronicle on 10/17/99, "Hillary Clinton hasn't won anything since being elected student government president at Wellesley College in 1968."

Reporter Francine Kiefer in the Christian Science Monitor on 11/29/99, "So far, Hillary Rodham Clinton's performance coming out of the starting blocks has mainly produced nagging doubts about her readiness for a high-profile Senate campaign."

Another 13% of negative statements attack Clinton's character, image, or personality. Many of these critiques refer to her relationship with Bill Clinton or her reaction to the Lewinsky scandal.

Reporter Bill Wippert in the Buffalo News on 12/1/99, "Those with a less charitable view see her as a power-mad conniver who stuck with a serial adulterer because it put her in proximity to political power, a woman who's running for office in a conveniently adopted state because she can't stand to be just another former first lady."

Political columnist for Arkansas Democrat-Gazette John Brummett, quoted in Minneapolis Star Tribune on 11/15/99, "Her problems as a politician are exacerbated by her attitude that she is right and moral, so if you criticize her, you must be part of some sinister cabal."

Former Reagan speechwrier, Peggy Noonin, quoted in the New York Daily News on 10/17/99, "To say to this great state full of gifted people that you deserve to be its senator is an act of such mad boomer selfishness and narcissism that even from the Clintons, the Gimme and Getme of American politics, is an act of utter and breathtaking gall."

Opponent Rudy Giuliani quoted in the Washington Post on 2/2/00, "Any time the Clintons are caught in a situation where there is clearly a doubt about the credibility of something they've said, that's the day on which they make several charges that are specious in order to get you to not pay attention to either a mistake or a misrepresentation."

Reporter Sandy Grady in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on 12/1/99, "Hillary Clinton is a one-woman soap opera."

Reporter Maureen Dowd in the New Orleans Times Picayune on 11/25/99, "But there's something so ruthless and chaotic about the Clintons. They seem like a virus or alien that needs a host body to survive... We're going to have to keep living with their weird marital problems and tangled ambitions forever and ever."

Somewhat related to criticism of her character are attacks on Clinton's non-traditional roles and views. Some negative statements allude to her feminism or her being a strong or powerful woman. These statements occurred 31 times and comprise 9% of all negative statements.

Reporter Susan Milligan in the Boston Globe on 1/5/00, "The wives of the current Republican candidates have emphasized that they would not get involved in policy-making as Mrs. Clinton has done."

Book author Danielle Crittenden, quoted in the Boston Globe on 12/26/99, "Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, you have to be sick of this Lady Macbeth character we now have in the White House, and look forward to having a first lady who will be happy in the traditional role and secure in a good marriage."

Magazine editor Tina Brown, quoted in the St. Louis Post Dispatch on 12/12/99, predicts Clinton will lose because female voters dislike "a hyper-careerist perfectionist who always makes them feel inadequate, inferior and ill at ease."

Reporter Mary Leonard in the Boston Globe on 12/26/99, describing the wives of current presidential hopefuls, "These would-be First Ladies provide a stark contrast to Hillary Rodham Clinton, the lawyer and key advisor who won no popularity contests."

Reporter David Daley in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on 12/19/99, "To others, she is a dangerous demon ideologue. She's the Oz behind the Whitewater, travel office and commodities trading scandals, a frustrating feminist who mocked Tammy Wynette for standing by her man, then did just that during the humiliating impeachment drama."

Finally, though comprising only 11 negative statements (3%), critiques of Clinton's role transition or role conflict bear reporting due to their key relationship to the central focus of this study. A number of statements were documented in the sample demonstrating concern or criticism triggered by the issues and problems that arise in Clinton's unprecedented attempt to progress from first lady to Senator. Some either noted the role conflict Clinton may be experiencing or judged as unfair her use of first lady perks in her Senate campaign.

Reporter Judy Mann in the Washington Post (Style section) on 12/1/99, "Mrs. Clinton is turning her back on that (first lady tradition) and on the very great honor that the American people bestowed upon her when that made her husband president. It may not put her in the Senate, but she's sure going to be one for the history books."

Same as directly above, "But as political as Mrs. Roosevelt was, she never abdicated her traditional role to run for office."

Reporter E.J. Dionne in the Denver Post on 11/26/99, calls Clinton's attempted transition "the most improbable political leap in our history."

Headline in the Arizona Republic on 12/9/99, "Hillary Clinton sheds wifely role; looks to secure her own place with NY campaign for senate."

Reporter Muriel Robbin in the Minneapolis Star Tribune on 11/15/99, "no hint of how she will climb out of the protective bubble in which she has lived for more than seven years and transform herself into the kind of candidate who will get down and dirty next year in a battle for a US Senate seat in the nation's toughest political battleground."

Reporter Adam Nagourney in the New York Times on 11/13/99, "The events this week on the West Bank crystallized what a growing number of Democrats suspected: Mrs. Clinton's underlying problem is her continuing effort to be both the nation's First Lady and the likely Democratic candidate for US Senate in New York."

Reporter Deborah Horan in Houston Chronicle on 11/11/99, "The fact that it (trip to Israel) is happening now has sparked accusations that she is using her role as First Lady to campaign."

Reporter Julia Malone in the Atlanta Journal Constitution on 12/8/99, "Clinton takes an official photographer and a trip director as well as her security detail on trips, all paid for by public funds."

Representative Charles Rangel (D-Harlem), quoted in the New York Daily News on 11/28/99, "There is still the awkwardness of playing two roles. She seems to recognize it's a problem, but we'll have to see how she works that out."

Discussion

This study finds support for the notion that as Hillary Clinton delves further into the sphere of active politics, newspaper coverage tends to adopt a more scrutinizing and negative tone. Support for the first series of hypotheses suggests the stories in which Clinton is politically active and in which the focus is on the Senate race contain both a greater number of negative statements and, overall, a more negative tone. These findings support and extend the existing literature that documents the widespread negativity Clinton has received from the press (Bennetts, 1994; Sherrill, 1994; Winfield, 1997) and that suggests her ventures into the realm of political activity help explain that bad press (Scharrer & Bissell, in press.)

Overall support for the hypotheses concerning prominence also suggest this somewhat negative coverage of Clinton's political activity is often located in attention-getting places in the newspaper and typically features her as a main character. This supports the theory that some news frames, particularly those meeting standards for news values such as importance and deviance or those involving "hard news," are given more prominent play by journalists and those involved in the news reporting process (Gans, 1979; Scott & Gobetz, 1992; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978).

The overall trend toward negativity—documented for both Clinton and Giuliani—could be explained by a number of factors. The press could be flexing their "watchdog" muscles to provide a check on and balance to the newfound power both have as viable contenders for a high-level public office, evidence of the front-runner effect (Robinson & Sheehan, 1992). Reporters and editors could also suspect that the American public feels ambivalent, and sometimes harshly negative, about Clinton, and therefore may be appealing to this audience in their approach. Finally, members of the press could themselves be—or could perceive their readers to be—unready for a strong woman such as Clinton to succeed in making this non-traditional transition in roles that leads to an increase in power and self-sufficient prestige.

One might expect attacks on the two most commonly discussed aspects of political candidates, issues and image. Indeed, issues and image scored in the top five categories of attacks on Clinton and Giuliani. However, the category that was most frequently attacked for Clinton was her campaign itself. These critiques of political foibles, heavy-handedness, and strategic missteps serve to delegitimize her candidacy, emphasize her relative inexperience, and call into question her viability and likelihood of winning. In fact, a category of attacks specifically designated for critiques of Clinton's chances of winning garnered the fourth largest number of attacks (tied with image). Opponents and others also seem to be capitalizing on Clinton's inexperience with the state of New York, with the third largest number of attacks referring to her "carpet bagger" status. Again, the end result is an overall news media representation of a Clinton campaign that seems beleaguered, troubled, and unlikely to be successful.

It is also interesting to note the sources of criticism of Clinton compared to Giuliani. By far the most frequent critic of Clinton in this sample was the reporter herself or himself. This is a particularly provocative finding since journalistic norms are traditionally in place to uphold the principle of objectivity in reporting. It seems as though the topic of Hillary Clinton—and particularly the politics and power of Hillary Clinton—inspire in some a temporary lifting of the typical standards for remaining objective. Since this study looked only at news stories, no columns or opinion pieces, the attribution of negative statements to reporters themselves is surprising.

Giuliani himself appears to be rather outspoken in his early competition with Clinton. He was the second most frequent critic of Clinton, whereas Clinton only directly criticized Giuliani in 6% of his negative statements. This difference has precedence in political communication research which finds some female candidates are reluctant to attack their opponents for fear of sounding too harsh and unfeminine (Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1992, 1993; Riggle, et al., 1997). In light of the negative media attention Clinton has received when she has been less traditional and stereotypically feminine in the past, it appears as though she may be protecting her image by not directly attacking Giuliani in this early period in the Senate contest.

Results that showed degree of certainty of whether Clinton would be a candidate to be an inconsistent and typically insignificant predictor of tone, as well as the lack of support for predicted changes toward a more negative tone over time, were intriguing. These two factors could suggest the front-runner effect and the watchdog tendencies of the media were present in approximately equal levels over time rather than at the hypothesized increasing level. This explanation seems likely since both candidates' viability and inclusion in the race, though slow to be official, was viewed by most as a foregone conclusion for all of the four months in the sample. Negative coverage seemed to also be dictated by particular events and episodes that temporarily shed a poor light on the campaign. These occurred at various times throughout the period of coverage examined, rather than displaying an increasing trend. Finally, if the frontrunner effect is to build over time or a sense of watchdog vigilance is to be heightened, it is also likely that the period covered in this study is too early to document these tendencies. Even at the end of the time period in the sample, the election loomed ahead more than 10 months.

The results that found New York State newspapers did not contain more negative statements nor a significantly more negative tone than other area newspapers are also interesting. Perhaps because of the prominence of the candidates, especially Clinton, the race has drawn extensive and widespread media attention. The rest of the country appears to be interested in the race and newspapers around the country continually find the major events and updates about the contest sufficiently newsworthy to include in their pages. Although it seems logical that New York newspapers may scrutinize the candidates that are attempting to govern New Yorkers more closely than other newspapers, the prominence and novelty aspects of the contest appear to be drawing approximately equally negative attention from newspapers from other locations.

Finally, the differences documented in the sample for newspaper coverage of Clinton compared to Giuliani are also provocative. Though it is important to mention that stories about Clinton were gathered for a longer period than stories about Giuliani, statistically significant differences in negativity in coverage emerged. Not only did Clinton receive a significantly lower overall tone, she was also the subject of a larger number of stories in which there were multiple negative or critical statements made about her or her campaign. The finding that the maximum number of negative statements per story for Giuliani was 4 and for Clinton it was 14 is particularly telling and seems to indicate the degree of vehemence with which some news sources and perhaps even some news reporters discuss Clinton.

Future research in this area would do well to follow this historical political situation as it progresses. It would be beneficial to know whether coverage changes in any perceptible way as the campaign goes beyond the preliminary and exploratory stages examined in this study to a full-fledged battle between the candidates as election time nears. As the voting decision draws closer, the race is likely to receive even more coverage and that coverage may reflect increased news media scrutiny. Subsequent analyses would help extend and illuminate understanding of the complex and often adversarial relationship between Hillary Rodham Clinton and the press.

Table 1. Aspects of the subject criticized and to whom negative statements were attributed.

Aspect Criticized

Subject of News Story	Number of Negative Statements	
Hillary Clinton	(N = 342 stories)	
Campaign/politics	118	(34.5%)
Issues/platform	116	(33.9%)
Carpetbagger	53	(15.5%)
Likelihood of winning	45	(13.2%)
Image/character	45	(13.2%)
Feminism/non-traditional	31	(9.1%)
Other	20	(5.8%)
Role conflict	11	(3.2%)
Bill Clinton/scandal	7	(2.0%)
Physical appearance	4	(1.2%)
Yankees fan	3	(0.9%)
Elitism	2	(0.6%)
Rudy Giuliani	(N = 96 stories)	
Issues/platform	89	(92.7%)
Image/character	42	(43.8%)
Campaign/politics	20	(20.8%)
Art controversy	11	(11.5%)
Likelihood of winning	4	(4.2%)
Record as NYC mayor	4	(4.2%)

Attribution of Criticism

Hillary Clinton	(N = 342 stories)	
The reporter writing this story	131	(38.3%)
Rudy Giuliani	68	(19.9%)
Giuliani's staff	67	(19.6%)
Politicians/elected officials	44	(12.9%)
Authors/other reporters/celebs	41	(12.0%)
Ordinary citizens	33	(9.6%)
Activists/community leaders	32	(9.4%)
Analysts/pollsters/pundits	24	(7.0%)
Other	14	(4.1%)

Table 1. What aspects of the subject were criticized and to whom the negative statements were attributed, continued.

Rudy Giuliani	(N = 96 stories)	
Activists/community leaders	33	(34.4%)
Clinton's staff	32	(33.3%)
Politicians/elected officials	25	(26.0%)
The reporter writing this story	19	(19.8%)
Authors/other reporters/celebs	17	(17.7%)
Ordinary citizens	13	(13.5%)
Hillary Clinton	6	(6.3%)
Analysts/pollsters/pundits	5	(5.2%)
Other	5	(5.2%)

Table 2. Differences in means, N = 342.

Variables	Mean	SD	F	sig.
Tone of story for HRC				
Politically active	2.61	.78		
Not politically active	3.30	.72		
Mixed	2.85	.70	19.95	p < .001
Number of negative statements about HRC				
Politically active	1.63	2.53		
Not politically active	.41	1.05		
Mixed	1.18	1.81	7.36	p = .001
Tone of story for HRC				
About the Senate race	2.65	.80		
Not about the Senate race	3.15	.67	13.72	p < .001
Number of negative statements about HRC				
About the Senate race	1.68	2.47		
Not about the Senate race	.99	.99	42.83	p < .001
Tone of story for HRC				
Candidacy is only possible	2.91	.30		
Candidacy is probable	2.68	.82		
Candidacy is definite	2.60	.81	.87	ns
Number of negative statements about HRC				
Candidacy is only possible	.36	.92		
Candidacy is probable	1.71	2.52		
Candidacy is definite	1.77	2.59	1.60	ns
Length of the article				
Politically active	591.02	337.82		
Not politically active	604.08	398.19		
Mixed	639.66	547.34	.37	ns
Length of the article				
About the Senate race	589.41	344.84		
Not about the Senate race	638.44	506.87	1.02	ns
Length of the article				
Candidacy is only possible	416.18	211.63		
Candidacy is probable	585.64	344.47		
Candidacy is definite	658.00	436.42	2.49	p = .085

Table 2. Differences in means, N = 342, continued.

Tone of the story for HRC				
October, 1999	2.68	.71		
November, 1999	2.51	.82		
December, 1999	2.65	.79		
January, 2000	2.62	.78		
February, 2000	2.43	1.13	.50	ns
Number of negative statements about HRC				
October, 1999	1.07	1.93		
November, 1999	2.51	2.97		
December, 1999	1.46	2.52		
January, 2000	1.31	2.39		
February, 2000	1.71	1.71	2.75	$p < .05$

Table 3. Crosstabulations of variables measuring prominence of news stories by political activity, whether the story was about the Senate race, and degree of certainty for candidacy, N = 342.

Where was the story positioned?

	Front page	Inside page	Front page	Inside page
	First section	First section	Inside section	Inside section
Politically active	59.4% (N=19)	64.8% (N=149)	68.2% (N=15)	63.8% (N=37)
Not politically active	25.0 (N=8)	18.3 (N=42)	9.1 (N=2)	15.5 (N=9)
Mixed	15.6 (N=5)	17.0 (N=39)	22.7 (N=5)	20.7 (N=12)
	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 2.99$, Cramer's V = .07, ns

Was the subject primary or secondary character?

	Primary	Secondary
Politically active	70.9% (N=122)	57.6% (N=98)
Not politically active	10.5 (N=18)	25.3 (N=43)
Mixed	18.6 (N=32)	17.1 (N=29)
	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 13.0$, Cramer's V = .20, $p < .01$

Where was the story positioned?

	Front page	Inside page	Front page	Inside page
	First section	First section	Inside section	Inside section
About Senate race	71.9% (N=23)	76.5% (N=176)	77.3% (N=17)	65.5% (N=38)
Not about Senate race	28.1 (N=9)	23.5 (N=54)	22.7(N=5)	34.5 (N=20)
	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 3.13$, Cramer's V = .10, ns

continued on next page

Table 3. Crosstabulations of variables measuring prominence of news stories by political activity, whether the story was about the Senate race, and degree of certainty for candidacy, N = 342, continued.

	Was the subject primary or secondary character?	
	Primary	Secondary
About Senate race	84.9% (N=146)	63.5% (N=108)
Not about Senate race	15.1 (N=26)	36.5 (N=62)
	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 20.4$, Cramer's V = .24, $p < .001$

	Where was the story positioned?			
	Front page First section	Inside page First section	Front page Inside section	Inside page Inside section
Possible candidacy	0.0% (N=0)	5.9% (N=10)	0.0% (N=0)	2.4% (N=1)
Probable candidacy	57.1 (N=12)	60.4 (N=102)	75.0 (N=15)	41.5 (N=17)
Definite candidacy	42.9 (N=9)	33.7 (N=57)	25.0 (N=5)	56.1 (N=23)
	100%	100%	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 11.57$, Cramer's V = .15, $p = .07$

	Was the subject primary or secondary character?	
	Primary	Secondary
Possible candidacy	2.0% (N=3)	7.7% (N=8)
Probable candidacy	57.1 (N=84)	59.6 (N=62)
Definite candidacy	40.8 (N=60)	32.7 (N=34)
	100%	100%

$\chi^2 = 5.58$, Cramer's V = .15, $p = .06$

Table 4. Differences in tone of stories by whether the newspaper was from New York state or elsewhere.

Variable	Mean	SD	F	sig.
Tone of story for Clinton				
New York newspapers	2.73	.72		
Newspapers from elsewhere	2.79	.85	1.83	ns
Tone of story for Giuliani				
New York newspapers	2.80	.82		
Newspapers from elsewhere	2.83	.77	1.23	ns
Tone of story for both candidates				
New York newspapers	1.28	1.91		
Newspapers from elsewhere	1.50	2.40	.33	ns

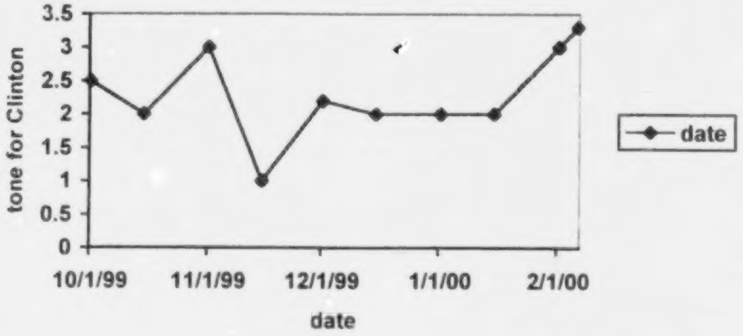
Table 5. Differences in tone for Clinton compared to Giuliani.

	Number of negative statements, categorized			
Subject of story	1	2-3	4-6	7+
Clinton	78.9% (N=303)	66.0% (N=21)	93.3% (N=14)	100% (N=4)
Giuliani	21.1% (N=81)	40.0% (N=14)	6.7% (N=1)	0% (N=0)

$\chi^2 = 10.00$, Cramer's V = .15, $p = .019$

Variable	Mean	SD	t	sig.
Tone of story				
Clinton	2.61	.81		
Giuliani	2.82	.76	-2.68	$p < .01$

Figure 1. Changes in tone in newspaper coverage of Clinton over time.



References

Beasley, M. H. (1988). Betty Boyd Caroli, *First Ladies*. Book Review. Presidential Studies Quarterly, 18: 174-175.

Bennetts, L. (1994, June). Pinning down Hillary. Vanity Fair, 104-109; 154-160.

Benze, J. G. Jr. (1990). Nancy Reagan: China doll or dragon lady? Presidential Studies Quarterly, 20:777-790.

Brown, M.E. (1997). Feminism and cultural politics: Television audiences and Hillary Rodham Clinton. Political Communication, 14: 255-270.

Comstock, G., & Scharrer, E. (1999). Television: What's on, who's watching, and what it means. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Deaux K., & Lewis, L.L. (1984). The structure of gender stereotypes: Interrelationships among components and gender label." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46: 991-1004.

Entman, R.M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. Journal of Communication, 43(4): 51-58.

Gans, H. J. (1979). Deciding what's news. New York: Pantheon.

Gardetto, D. C. (1997). Hillary Rodham Clinton, symbolic gender politics, and the *New York Times*: January-November 1992. Political Communication. 14: 225-240.

Halpern, D.H. (1996). Media marginalization of political parties and candidates: The focus on fringe issues and the lack of consistent coverage in both print and broadcast. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Chicago, IL.

Huddy, L. & Terkildsen, N. (1992). The consequences of gender stereotypes for women candidates at different levels and types of office. Political Research Quarterly, 46 (3): 503-525.

Huddy, L. & Terkildsen, N. (1993). Gender stereotypes and the perception of male and female candidates. American Journal of Political Science, 37: 119-147.

Mayo, E.P. (1993, September 15). The influence and power of first ladies. Chronicle of Higher Education, pp. A52-A54..

Mower, J. (1992, September). What kind of first lady do we really want? McCall's, 124-130, 196.

Riggle, E.D.B., Miller, P.M., Shields, T.G., & Johnson, M.M.S. (1997) Gender stereotypes and decision context in the evaluation of political candidates. Women and Politics, 17 (3): 69-87.

Robinson, M.J., & Sheehan, M.A. (1983). Over the wire and on TV: CBS and UPI in campaign '80. New York: Russell Sage.

Ross, M.H. (1992). Television news and candidate fortunes in presidential nomination campaigns: The case of 1984. American Politics Quarterly, 20 (1), 69-98.

Scharrer, E., & Bissell, K. (in press). Overcoming traditional boundaries: The role of political activity in the coverage of recent first ladies. Women and Politics, in press.

Schneider, F.P. (1985). The substance and structure of network television news: An analysis of content features, format features, and formal features. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

Scott, D.K., & Gobetz, R.H. (1992). Hard news/soft news content of the national broadcast networks, 1972-1987. Journalism Quarterly, 69 (2), 406-412.

Sherrill, M. (1994, June). Hillary Rodham Clinton. Mirabella, 78-84.

Shoemaker, P. J. & Reese, S. (1996). Mediating the message:Theories of influences on mass media content. Longman Publishers.

Templin, C. (1999). Hillary Clinton as threat to gender norms: Cartoon images of the first lady. Journal of Communication Inquiry. 23(1): 20-36.

Tuchman, G. (1978). Making news: A study in the construction of reality. New York: Free Press.

White, D. M. (1959). The gatekeeper: A case study in the selection of news. Journalism Quarterly, 27:383-390.

Winfield, B.H. (1994). "Madame President": Understanding a new kind of first lady. Media Studies Journal, 8 (2): 59-71.

Winfield, B.H. (1997). The making of an image: Hillary Rodham Clinton and American Journalists. Political Communication, 14:241-253.

[1] The newspapers included in the sample were: *New York Daily News, New York Times, Washington Post, Buffalo News, St. Louis Post Dispatch, Cleveland Plain Dealer, New Orleans Times Picayune, Los Angeles Times, St. Petersburg Times, USA Today, Boston Herald, Boston Globe, Houston Chronicle, Tampa Tribune, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Atlanta Journal Constitution, Detroit News, Minneapolis Star Tribune, San Diego Union Tribune, Arizona Republic, Seattle Times, Chicago Sun Times, Christian Science Monitor, Denver Post, Columbus Dispatch, San Francisco Chronicle, Indianapolis Star, Miami Herald,* and *Kansas City Star.*

THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL ADVERTISING: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POSITIVE ADS AND ISSUE, IMAGE AND MIXED ATTACKS

Sung Wook Shim
Doctoral Student
College of Journalism and Communications
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Address: 3600 SW 23rd St. #A2
Gainesville, FL 32608
Tel: 352)338-7805
E-mail: swsjah33@hotmail.com

*Manuscript submitted to the Mass Communication & Society Division for consideration of presentation at the AEJMC annual convention, Phoenix, Arizona, August 2000
I do no wish to be considered for the Moller Award.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact on the attacking candidate when he/she attacks the attacked candidate with four types of ads: issue, image attacks, both issue and image combined attacks and positive. The study results show that image attack produced a greater negative change than issue attack for evaluation of attacking candidate. The decline was significant between likelihood of voting for attacking candidate in the pretest and likelihood of voting for attacking candidate in the posttest. It is assumed that subjects didn't like negative political advertising. Compared to positive advertising, negative political advertising with issue attack can be treated as almost the same as the positive advertising. Finally, negative political advertising did produce source derogation, causing harmful effects on the character evaluation and the likelihood of voting for attacking candidate.

Introduction

Campaign advertising in the 1996 presidential race was the most negative in the history of presidential campaigns (Kaid, 1997). Politicians are still going negative. The reason is that negative commercials usually work, even if they might alienate voters (Germond & Witcover, 1996). While the definition of negative political advertising varies, Surlin and Gordon "operationalized the genre as advertising which attacks the other candidate personally, the issues for which the other candidate stands, or the party of the other candidate" (as cited in Garramone, 1984, p. 250).

Much research shows that negative political advertising is still widely used. In the1992 presidential campaign, fifty-five percent of the Bush campaign ads and sixty-nine percent of the Clinton ads were classified as negative ads attacking the opponent. "The Clinton percentage is the highest percentage of negative ads ever documented in a presidential campaign." (Kaid, 1992, p. 116).

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact on the attacking candidate when he/she attacks the attacked candidate with four types of ads: issue, image attacks, both issue and image combined attacks and positive. An experiment with manipulated print ads was conducted to examine the character evaluation, advertising evaluation and the likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate. Other studies have looked at issue vs. image. In this study, differences among three attacks will be examined. In addition to this, the differences between positive ads and three types of negative ads will be found.

Negative political advertising has unintended effects. Some studies about negative political advertising indicate that voters did not like negative ads and found them unnecessary (Garramone, 1984; Merrit, 1984; Pinkleton & Garramone, 1992). It also indicated that a strong attack on a candidate may bring a backlash against the attacker, rather than the attacked (Garramone, 1984). Critics of negative political advertising argue that these ads contribute to voter alienation and apathy, and are harmful to the U.S. democratic process (Pinkleton, 1997).

In spite of this, negative political advertising continues. Empirical research indicates that negative comparative advertising lowers the attacked candidate's evaluation without lowering the attacking candidate's evaluation (Pinkleton, 1997). Exposure to a spot with technological distortion, which was more likely to occur in negative spots than in positive ones, would fortify the image and vote likelihood for the attacking candidate while lowering the image and vote likelihood for the opponent (Kaid, 1997).

Because the difference between issue vs. image advertising has been examined, More research needs to be conducted to analyze the effects of an issue attack, an image attack, and a mixed attack about an attacking candidate and positive advertising.

Literature Review

Negative political advertising

Negative political advertisements focus on the weaknesses of an opponent rather than on the positive attributes of ad's sponsor. Negative advertising has played an increasingly important part in campaigning, taking on a more important role from the 1964 presidential election to the present (McNair, 1994). Indeed, 1988 was the year of the best-known negative advertising of all because of numerous negative ads such as the "Revolving Door." This Bush commercial sought to portray Dukakis as soft on crime by claiming the Massachusetts governor had voted against the death penalty and had given weekend furloughs to first degree murderers not eligible for parole (West, 1993). Another example is the negative spot by the Bush's side which contrasted Dukakis' declared "green" policy with his record as governor in Boston, where it was alleged he had allowed the Boston harbor to become polluted (McNair, 1994, p. 94).

As Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991) suggest, there are several types of negative ads, various designs used in the transmission of negative issue appeals, and many kinds of stylistic techniques for constructing negative spots.

Independent variable check

Negative political advertising is attack advertising. It contains an aggressive, one-sided assault, designed to draw attention to an opponent's weaknesses in either character or issue positions (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1989; Merrit 1984; Surlin & Gordon 1977; Pinkleton 1997).

Negative issue attack cites a candidate's position on specific issues or items of public policy. As for the pretest about how important it is that issues are related to financial aid, housing, raising wage level, and health benefit, the mean scores are over 4.20, above the average of 3.5. It is assumed that the issues that were used in this study are appropriate for the students.

Negative image attack cites a candidate's personal characteristics or traits without addressing specific issue stands. Such advertising may contain information about an opponent's medical history, personal life, religion, sex life, or family members (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1989). As for the pretest about how important it is that images are related to medical history, personal life, religion, sex life, or family members, the mean scores are over 4.00, above the average of 3.5. It is assumed that the images that were used in this study are appropriate for the students.

Negative mixed attack cites both an issue and an image attack. The traits of both attacks are included in this attack. This format of attack might be typical in negative political advertising.

A one-way ANOVA was used to examine participants' perception of stimulus. The results show significant differences in participants' perceptions of the issue/image/mixed stimuli [F (3,94)=12.75 p<.001.]

The effects of negative political advertising

Intended effects

The intended effect of negative political advertising is to create negative feelings toward the attacked candidate and positive feelings toward the attacking candidate (Garramone, 1984). Surlin and Gordon (1977) found direct attack ads were unethical but informative. Comparisons between candidates, even if tilted to one side, are usually rich with information (as cited in Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). Negative political advertising may well offer more information to voters than positive ads, and people retain negative information more easily than positive information (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991).

In fact, negative political advertising has often been cited as offering greater issue clarity than positive spots, which is especially helpful for people who are not familiar with the campaign or political affairs (Hagstrom & Guskind, 1986). Negative political advertising also increases political debate. It actually opens up the campaign to the issues by making the candidates respond to the charges and countercharges. These negative ads are used strategically to set the terms of the campaign debate by framing the issues (Nugent, 1987).

Additionally, negative spots can exert a strong impact on memory. People remember negative ads better than positive ads. They also recognize negative ads more accurately and quickly than positive spots (Shapiro & Rieger, 1989). There are many reasons for this, like the psychological tendency to attach more weight to negative rather than positive information. In addition to this, the other effects are that the negative spot has a stronger impact if there is an already existing perception, negative spots have a better production value, and negative spots get more news coverage than positive ads (Perloff, 1997).

Unintended effects

Negative political advertising is "often thought to promote alienation because it has been viewed as increasing the negativity of the political process. Political advertising in general is not the most highly regarded form of communication, and negative advertising is seen as something worse" (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991, p. 276). Garramone (1984) found negative advertising has a "strong negative influence on the viewer's feeling toward the sponsor but only a slight net negative influence on feelings toward the target (p. 256)." Merrit (1984) also investigated negative political advertising and found negative advertising produced negative effects toward both the sponsor and the target.

Theoretical background

Comparative product advertising

Comparative product advertising provides some insights into negative political advertising (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). Because of the nature of negative comparative advertisements, they may produce a differential and perhaps more "powerful influence on the receivers' cognitive organization and knowledge structure for the communicated information" (Wilson et al., 1979, p. 566). Because comparative advertising may be used both to make statements about the attacking brand and to make point-by-point contrasts about the attacking and competing brands, this type of advertisement may hold more attention and involvement on the part of receiver than would similar non-comparative advertisements (Wilson et al., 1979). In addition, while the receiver encodes the relationships brought forth in a comparative message, a deeper level of information processing may result, and the receiver may retain a more meaningful perception of the message than would occur under a non-comparative advertising condition (Wilson et al., 1979).

According to the cognitive response model, thoughts (cognitive response) elicited in various forms of communication can be seen as underlying factors which mediate the overall effectiveness of that communication (Wilson et al., 1979).

Wright (1973) categorized three cognitive responses to advertising communication as support argument, counterargument, and source derogation. These variables can be summarized as follows:

> Support Argument: in relating incoming information to existing beliefs, the receiver may activate responses indicating that congruent associations have been discovered or that the message argument is supported by already entrenched beliefs.
>
> Counterargument: activated when incoming information is compared to the existing belief system and a discrepancy is noted. The spontaneous thought activated is assumed to neutralize or counter message evidence.
>
> Source derogation: an alternate type of resistive response focuses on the source of the information. The source derogating response may serve as a substitute for counterargument and may be used quite frequently in situations where the source is easily viewed as biased (an unfortunate description of mass-media advertising p. 54).

Merrit (1984) showed examples of these variables. Support arguments include negative images of the target ("He is indeed that bad"). The reduction of dissonance through counterargument gives images of the target that balance the image ("He is changed"). Source derogation involves negative images of the sponsor ("He is a mudslinger") or of the message ("It's misrepresentation") in the negative political advertising context (p. 29)

Wright indicated that source derogation is a more frequent response to dissonance than counterargument since the source might be assuredly biased (as cited in Merrit, 1984). Also, it can be expected that negative political advertising is likely to produce source derogation and cause harmful effects toward the attacking candidate when viewers see attacking political advertising.

In terms of negative political advertising, comparative political advertising is more effective than comparative product advertising in achieving the desired communication goals of recall, image enhancement, and persuasion for a number of reasons (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). The effectiveness of negative advertising can be explained in terms of comparative advertising.

Expectancy theory

Expectancy theory focuses on the relationship between language use and the effectiveness of such language use on persuasion (Burgoon & Miller, 1985). Expectancy theory identifies two violations: positive or negative violation. In terms of the persuasion effects of the two violations, the theory assumes that when messages positively violate people's linguistic expectations, the violation has a positive influence on people's attitudes and evokes persuasive effectiveness (Burgoon & Miller, 1985). Contrary to this, when messages negatively violate people's linguistic expectations, a "boomerang effect occurs, with receivers changing to the position opposite to the one advocated by the communicator" (Burgoon & Miller, 1985, p. 200).

As one would imagine, expectancy theory can be applied to various fields of study. One application concerns the effectiveness of negative political advertising. Based on the theory, it can be assumed that voters have normative expectations about negative political advertising because such advertising is one of the most common genres in today's politics, and voters have been exposed to various negative ads (Park, 1996). Since most negative ads have been employed to attack the opponent's image or issues, people may expect negative political ads to have standard formats and intense messages. If negative political ads conform to people's normative expectations, expectancy theory defines it as a negative violation and predicts that it arouses negative effects toward the sponsor (Park, 1996).

Image versus Issue

Not surprisingly, image versus issue is a longstanding theme in politics. As far as West's study is concerned, from 1952 to 1992, domestic performance and specific policy statements have been the object of negative ads more than personal qualities. In 1980, ninety-five percent of ads dealing with domestic matters were negative, as were seventy-three percent of those in 1984 and eighty-three percent in 1988. In the 1992 primary television spots, fifty-nine percent of these primary ads for all candidates concentrated on candidate images, and twenty-four percent stressed issues (Kaid & Ballotti, 1991).

In qualifying negative political advertising, Johnson and Copeland (1987) identified 10 negative advertising topics that they classified as either "political" or "personal." Political topics include political record, issue stands, and voting record. Personal topics include personal life, current or past marriage, criminal activities, family members, religion, medical history, and sex life. This political/personal distinction is suggestive of political advertising's longstanding issue/image distinction (Roddy & Garramone, 1988, p. 417).

While issue appeals are related to specific policies, image appeals are related to personal characteristics of the candidate (Kaid & Sanders, 1978). Tests of the effectiveness of issue versus image political commercials have found that issue ads brought a more favorable candidate evaluation (Kaid & Sanders, 1978) and a greater intention to vote for the candidate (Garramone, 1985) than image ads. Moreover, Johnson-Cartee and Copeland concluded that voters were more likely to tolerate negative commercials that focus on policy than on personality (as cited in West, 1993, p. 52). In the Thorson et al.'s study (1991), issue commercials have a more positive impact on attitudes and voting intent than image commercials but image commercials produce better memory scores than issue commercials.

Even though political advertising can be divided into issue and image advertising, sometimes the boundary between them might be unclear. Also, because combined issue and image advertising is shown, it is appropriate to examine the mixed advertising in this study.

Based on these studies, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Negative political advertising containing an image attack will produce more negative change in the evaluation of the attacking candidate than advertising containing an issue attack on the attacked candidate.

H2: Negative political advertising containing an image attack will produce more negative change in likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate than advertising containing an issue attack.

H3: Negative political advertising will produce source derogation, causing harmful effects of (a) the character evaluation, and (b) likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate.

Research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What is the difference in the three attacks in the evaluation of the attacking candidate's character when a mixed (issue and image) attack is added?

RQ2: What is the difference in the three attacks in the likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate when a mixed (issue and image) attack is added?

RQ3: What is the difference in the three attacks in the evaluation of advertising when a mixed (issue and image) attack is added?

RQ4: What is the difference between positive ads and negative ads in the evaluation of the attacking candidate's character and in the likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate?

Method

A 1×4 pretest-posttest experiment was conducted on November 20, 1998, to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions. All participants enrolled in an advertising course received extra credit for their voluntary participation. Male and female participants were approximately equal in number, and all participants are of legal voting age.

The 100 participants were randomly assigned to one of four treatment conditions: group 1 (positive ad), group 2 (issue attack), group 3 (image attack), and group 4 (mixed attack). The treatment groups were exposed to different stimuli pertaining to a fictional candidate for a Senate seat in Wyoming. Individual group sizes were 25.

Stimuli

Two types of stimuli were created for use in the experiment. Pretests of candidate biographic profiles were conducted on dependent variables. These stimuli contained general information about the attacking candidate's education, employment background, volunteer work, and political accomplishment. Advertising stimuli were based on real-world examples of political advertising. Candidates were fictional.

In the initial pretesting, the advertising stimuli were pretested and revised to produce the final stimuli used in the experiment. In terms of execution, stimuli contained the line "Joe Smith For Senate Vote for Smith!, On October 3rd, Paid by Joe Smith." The following descriptions were also provided: supports tax relief, supports welfare reform, supports public education, supports Medicare for issue attack, is a parishioner in the church, has a good health record and is able to maintain a political career, is keeping a happy home, and served as infantry squad leader with the U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division for image attack. Both contents of issue and image attack were combined in mixed attack.

A positive political ad containing public affairs and general information about the attacking candidate was used in place of a stimulus in the first group.

Procedures

At the beginning of the experiment, participants were instructed to read the candidate profiles and complete a series of pretest scales. Next, they were exposed to the advertising stimuli and completed the posttest scales. Participants were debriefed after the instruments were collected.

Dependent measures

Dependent variables were measured for the attacking candidate (a) evaluation of the candidate's character (b) likelihood of voting for the candidate and (c) evaluation of the candidate's advertising

Character evaluation. Subjects evaluated each candidate on 7-point scales using seven attributes found useful in previous research investigating candidate images (Garramone, 1988). The attributes are intelligent, sincere, believable, honest, persuasive, concerned, and qualified.

Likelihood of voting. Subjects indicated on 5-point scales the likelihood that they would vote for the attacking candidate if they were voting in an election involving the candidates. "1" means not at all likely and "5" means very likely.

Advertising evaluation. Subjects evaluated each commercial on three 5-point scales according to how informative, believable, and persuasive they felt the commercial was. For each scale, "1" indicated little of the attribute and "5" indicated much of the attribute.

Results

The average reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha: Candidate evaluation for the pretest was .84, candidate evaluation for the posttest was .93 and advertising evaluation was .85.

A one-way ANOVA was used to examine participants' perception of stimulus. The results show significant differences in participants' perceptions of the issue/image/mixed stimuli [F (3,94)=12.75 p<.001.] An examination of means by Tukey's multiple comparison test revealed that there were significant differences between group 1 (positive ad) and group 3 (image attack) and also significant differences between group 2 (issue attack) and both group 3 (image attack), and group 4 (mixed attack).

To test H1 and H2, the attacking candidate evaluation scores of each treatment group were summed, and the pretest mean was subtracted from the posttest mean to create change-scores. The differences between treatment groups' change-scores were tested by specifying polynomial contrasts after the application of an omnibus F test. The results of analysis of variance indicate significant differences among change-score means: [F (2,71) = 3.47, P<.05.] Change-score contrasts show that the stimulus containing image attack produced a greater negative change in attacking candidate evaluations than the issue attack stimulus, supporting H1 as shown in Table 2. H2, which states that the image attacks on the attacked candidate will produce a greater negative change in likelihood of voting for attacking candidate than an issue attack on the attacked candidate, is not supported. This is shown in Table 3.

H3-a suggested that negative political advertising would produce source derogation, causing harmful effects of the character evaluation for the attacking candidate. As can be seen in Table 6, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean character evaluation for the pretest and the posttest [t (1,73)=-7.51, p<.001.]

H3-b suggested that negative political advertising would produce source derogation, causing harmful effects of the likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate. As shown in Table 6, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean likelihood of voting for the pretest and the posttest [t (1,73)=-2.14, p<.05.]

Overall, negative political advertising did produce source derogation, causing harmful effects on the character evaluation and the likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate.

The attacking candidate evaluation was tested to answer research question 1 about the impact of three attacks. The results of analysis of variance indicated no significant difference in attacking candidate evaluations [F (2,71)=2.19, p=.12.]

The likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate was tested to answer research question 2 about the impact of three attacks. The results of analysis of variance indicated no significant difference in likelihood of voting for attacking candidate [F (2,71)=1.76, p= .18.] As shown in Table 3, differences are small between the pretest in likelihood of voting for attacking candidate. Mixed attack has a higher difference between the pretest and the posttest.

Advertising evaluations were tested to answer research question 3 about the impact of three attacks. The results of analysis of variance showed significant difference in evaluation of advertising [F (2,72)=3.42 p<.05.] An examination of means by Tukey's multiple comparison test revealed that there were significant differences between Group 2 (issue attack) and Group 4 (mixed attack). It is assumed that issue attack is more favorable than mixed attack because of the higher mean score of issue attack than that of mixed attack. As shown in Table 4 and 5, the issue attack had higher mean scores than any other attacks as expected in this study. The mean score of image attack is almost the same as that of mixed attack.

Positive ads and three negative ads were contrasted to answer research question 4-a. There is no statistically significant difference between positive ads and three negative ads for the character evaluation [t=1.71 p=.24.] Importantly, the mean score of positive ad is almost the same as that of issue attack according to Figure 1. It leads to no significant difference between positive ads and three negative ads. To answer research question 4-b, there is no statistically significant difference between the positive ads and three negative ads for the likelihood of voting for attacking candidate [t=.233 p=.816.]

Discussion

The present study sought to determine the relative effectiveness of issue and image negative political advertising and positive and negative ads. The study results show that image attack produced a greater negative change than issue attack for evaluation of attacking candidate. In addition, the issue attack tended to have a higher attacking candidate evaluation even though it was not statistically significant.

By comparing the means among three attacks, issue attack (M=30.68) is higher than mixed attack (M=28.42) and image attack (M=26.08). These findings are consistent with research results showing an issue attack will be more effective than an image attack (Roddy & Garramone, 1988) and Thorson et al's study (1991) that issue commercials produced greater voting intent and more positive attitudes toward candidates' characters.

The mean score of character evaluation of attacking candidate decreases after seeing the positive ad (See Table 1). Possibly, this is because these ads don't show subjects the differentiation between candidates because they contain only positive arguments for the candidate.

In terms of voter backlash, sponsorship of negative political advertising has a little impact on the attacking candidate's evaluations and likelihood of voting for the attacking candidate. Attacking candidate evaluations did decline as a result of the use of negative political advertising. In addition, the decline was significant between likelihood of voting for attacking candidate in the pretest and likelihood of voting for attacking candidate in the posttest [$t=-2.43$, $p< .05$.] It is assumed that subjects didn't like negative political advertising.

However, the effects of negative political advertising are complex. Even though the mean scores of candidate evaluation and likelihood of vote declined after the advertising stimuli, the difference is small when comparing mean scores of positive ads ($M=30.58$) and that of issue attack ads ($M=30.68$). It is assumed that negative political advertising may have an influence on the attacking candidate, but negative political advertising with issue attack can be treated as almost the same as the positive advertising.

Finally, negative political advertising did produce source derogation, causing harmful effects on the character evaluation and the likelihood of voting for attacking candidate. These findings are consistent with findings that the source derogation is caused by the attacking advertising (Merrit, 1984; Park, 1996). The candidate wanting to attack another candidate may use careful negative political advertising. When the candidate has certain evidence about arguments, which he or she makes in the advertising, he or she can reduce harmful effect on him or her.

The main limitation of the present study is the use of student participants, who are not fully representative of the general electorate (Pinkleton, 1997). However, research suggested that because their age and education compensate for each other, college students are acceptable as participants in political advertising research (Garramone, 1984 & Pinkleton, 1997). Nonetheless, the study should be considered a single contribution to a body of research in progress. Finally, the study findings have a potential for future voters who are students now.

Another limitation is that the experimental setting was artificial with respect to lack of context. In a true election, voters do not base their decision solely on what they've seen in political commercials. Previous research also has found that individual differences such as age, education, and candidate preference mediate negative advertising effects (Roddy & Garramone, 1988). In this study, however, the fictional stimulus candidates and student sample did not allow for the investigation of such individual differences.

Future research examining the effects of political advertising should attempt to use a more representative sample and natural media exposure environments. Broadcast media should be used to provide information on the role of negative political advertising.

Reference

Burgoon, M., & Miller, G.R. (1985). An expectancy interpretation of language and persuasion. In Giles, H. and Clair, R. N. St. (Ed.), Recent advantages in language, communication, and social psychology (pp. 199-229). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Devlin, L. P. (1989). Contrast in presidential campaign commercials of 1988. American Behavioral Scientist, 32, 389-414.

Devlin, L. P. (1995). Political commercials in American presidential election. In Kaid, L.L and Holtz-Bacha, C. (Eds.), Political advertising in western democracies: Parties and candidates on television (pp. 198-199). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Garramone, G. M. (1984). Voter responses to negative political ads. Journalism Quarterly, 61, 250-259.

Garramone, G. M. (1985). Effects of negative political advertising: the role of sponsor and rebuttal. Journalism of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 29(2), 147-159.

Garramone, G. M., Atkin, C. K., Pinkleton, B. E., & Cole, R. T. (1990). Effects of Negative Political Advertising on the Political Process. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34(3), 299-311

Germond, J.W., & Witcover, J (1996). As long as Negative Political Advertising Work, It Will be Used. Sun's Washington Bureau.

Hagstrom, J., & Guskind, R. (1986). Selling the candidates. National Journal, 18, 2619-2626.

Johnson-Cartee, K.S. , & Copeland, G. (1987). Setting the parameters of good taste: Negative political advertising and the 1986 elections. Paper presented at the meeting of the International Communication Association, Montreal, Canada.

Johnson-Cartee, K.S., & Copeland, G.A. (1989). Southern voters' reaction to negative political ads in 1986. Journalism Quarterly, 66(4), 888-893, 986.

Johnson-Cartee, K. S., & Copeland, G. A. (1991). Negative political advertising: coming of age. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kaid, L.L. (1994). Political Advertising in the 1992 Campaign. In Denton, R.E. (Ed.), The 1992 presidential campaign : a communication perspective (pp. 111-127). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Kaid L.L. (1997). Effects of the Television Spots on Images of Dole and Clinton. American Behavioral scientist, 40(8), 1085-1094.

Kaid, L. L., & Sanders, K. R. (1978). Political television commercials: An experimental study of type and length. Communication Research, 5, 57-70.

Kaid, L L., & Boydston, J. (1987). An experimental study of the effectiveness of negative political advertisements. Communication Quarterly, 35(2), 193-201.

Kaid, L. L., & Ballotti, J. (1991). Television Advertising in Presidential Primaries and Caucuses. Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention.

Lutz, R.J. & Swasy, J.L. (1977). Integrating cognitive structure and cognitive response approaches to monitoring communication effects. Advances in Consumer Research, 6, 367.

McNair, B. (1994). An introduction to political communication. London: Routh Routledge.

Merrit, S. (1984). Negative political advertising: some empirical findings. Journal of Advertising, 13(3), 27-38.

Nugent, J. H. (1987). Positively negative. Campaign & Elections, 7, 47-49.

Park, J. J. (1996). Effectiveness of negative political advertising. M.A. Thesis. University of Missouri-Columbia.

Perloff, R. M. (1997). Political communication: politics, press and public in America. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 345-377.

Pinkleton, B. (1997). The Effects of Negative Comparative Political Advertising on Candidate Evaluations and Advertising Evaluation: An exploration. Journal of Advertising, 26, 19-30.

Roddy, B.L., & Garramone, G.M. (1988). Appeals and Strategies of Negative Political Advertising. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 32, 415-427.

Shapiro, M. A., & Rieger, R. H. (1989). Comparing positive and negative political advertising. Paper presented at the meeting of the International Communication Association, San Francisco.

Surlin, S.H. , & Gordon, T.F. (1977). How values affect attitudes toward direct reference political advertising. Journalism Quarterly, 54, 89-98.

Thorson, E., Christ, W. G., & Caywood, C. (1991). Effects of issue image strategies, attack and support appeals, music and visual content in political commercials. Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 35, 465-486.

Tinkham, S. F., & Weaver-Larisy, R. A. (1993). A diagnostic approach to assessing the impact of negative political television commercials. Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 37, 377-399.

West, D. M. (1993). Air Wars : Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-1992. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc, 46-52.

Wilson, R. D , & Muddrrisoglu, Aydin (1979). An analysis of cognitive responses to comparative advertising. Advances in Consumer Research, 7, 566-571.

Wright, P.L. (1973). The cognitive processing mediating acceptance of advertising. Journal of Marketing Research, 10, 53-62.

Appendix

Table 1. Change scores for attacking candidate evaluations

Condition	Change Scores
Issue attack	-4.6
Image attack	-10.04
Mixed attack	-6.06
Positive	-5.4

More negative values indicate greater negative change in attacking candidate evaluations from pretest to posttest.

Table 2. Contrast for attacking candidate evaluation change scores

	Difference	T Value	D.F.	T Prob.
Image attack with Issue attack	-5.4400	-2.528	71.0	.014*
Issue attack with mixed attack	1.3167	.606	71.0	.547
Image attack with mixed attack	-4.1233	-1.897	71.0	.062

*p< .05

Table 3. Change Scores for likelihood of voting for an attacking candidate

Condition	Change Scores
Issue attack	0
Image attack	-.28
Mixed attack	-.66
Positive	-.24

Table 4. Advertising evaluation

Condition	Mean Scores
Issue attack	9.52
Image attack	7.96
Mixed attack	7.72
Positive	9.12

Table 5. Contrast for advertising evaluation

	Value	S. Error	T Value	D.F.	T Prob.
Image attack with Issue attack	-1.56	.75	-2.09*	72	.040
Issue attack with mixed attack	1.8	.75	2.41	72	.19
Image attack with mixed attack	.24	.75	.321	72	.749

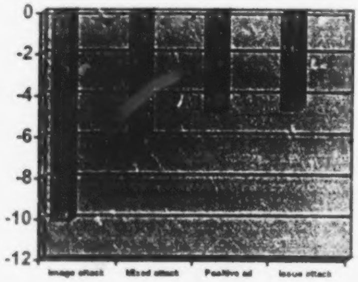
*p< .05

Table 6. T-test about the pretest and the posttest

	T value	df	P
Pretest vs. Posttest (Evaluation of character)	-7.51**	73	.000
Pretest vs. Posttest (Likelihood of vote)	-2.14*	73	.036

*p< .05, **p<.01

Figure 1. Mean of difference between pretest and posttest for character evaluation of candidate



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Pleasure, Reality, and Hegemony : A Television Drama and Women in a Korean Confucian Patriarchal Family Structure

Oh-Hyeon Lee
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Communication
University of Massachusetts

Submitted to Mass Communication and Society Division at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Phoenix, August 9-12, 2000.

Author Contact:
Oh-Hyeon Lee
990 North Pleasant Street, #B-18
Amherst, MA, 01002
Phone: (413) 546-1768
e-mail: ohhyeon@comm.umass.edu

I. Introduction

Bogo Ddo Bogo (Double Take)[1], a daily Korean prime-time drama, was one of the most popular television programs in Korea from February 1, 1998 to March 6, 1999. It maintained the number-one viewing rating (usually between 45-50 %) for over one year (from the fourth week after airing its first episode to the last week), except for some special programs such as the World Cup games of the Korean soccer team. It also recorded the highest rating in the history of Korean television serial dramas (57.3 %)[2].

However, during the period that *Bogo Ddo Bogo* was being broadcast, Korean media critics criticized the program for its unreal and conservative perspectives[3]. To me as a viewer[4], the show seems typical of prime-time Korean dramas that primarily portray the living style of large Korean family, hinging on family and romantic relationships. Moreover, its narratives and images seem to include patriarchal values even more explicitly than other Korean dramas do.[5]

Then, what made so many Korean women so enthusiastic about *Bogo Ddo Bogo*? What was the relationships between the pleasure that the female viewers took from the show and the dominant Korean ideologies embedded in the show? These questions can be restaied as following questions: What meanings did the viewers produce from *Bogo Ddo Bogo*? What relationships were there between the viewers' meanings and the dominant ideological meanings and values embedded in the show? As a result, my questions converge into the problem of the relationship between the media text and the audience, more specifically between the hegemonic power of the former and the agency[6] of the latter.

II. Literature Reviews: Patriarchal Media Texts and Female Viewers

Since Hall presented the encoding/decoding model (1980) that provides the theoretical framework for a new field of audience studies, there has been much empirical audience research that focuses on dynamic interactions between media text and audience in terms of the meaning production of a media message. One of the primary concerns of this empirical audience research has been the examination of the relations between patriarchal meanings and values articulated in media texts and meanings that the female viewers produce from the media texts. In particular, this research is interested in the mechanism through which or the degree to which the female viewers resist or consent to the patriarchal meanings and values. The difference in understanding the degree (or the ultimate role) of the female viewers' interpretive resistance has diverged the perspectives within audience studies. It could be said that two different traditions have been developed within audience studies, 'hegemony theory' and 'active audience theory', although we cannot categorize all existing audience research into one of the two traditions exclusively.

Within the category of hegemony theory, audience research shows that the process in which female audience members consume (use and interpret) media texts is very similar to the process in which Gramsci's notion of hegemony works[7]: the female viewers actively use media programs and produce meanings from them. And the women sometimes appear resistant to patriarchal meanings and values in certain levels (or aspects). However, the viewers' activeness in using and interpreting media messages ultimately works to reproduce the dominant (patriarchal) culture that oppresses the female viewers themselves. For example, the works of Press (1991), Heide (1995), and McKinley (1997) can be categorized in this tradition.

Active audience theory, on the other hand, focuses on the agency of female audience members over the hegemonic power of media texts or dominant cultures. The researchers emphasize that media texts are necessarily polysemic, and that the polysemic nature of media texts empowers the female audience. Researchers within this tradition also focus on the resistant function of pleasure that female viewers take when they consume media texts and on the role of community (subcultures) that would filter and reshape media messages. This group includes the works of Hobson (1982), Ang (1985), Fiske (1987, 1989), Jenkins (1992) and Brown (1990; 1994), at least in part.

However, the theoretical assumptions of active audience theory have been problematized by many researchers, especially proponents for hegemony theory, such as Carragee (1990, 1996), Condit (1989), Lewis (1991, 1994), Morley (1992, 1993, 1996), O'Shea (1989), and Schudson (1987). The critics argue that active audience theory tends to overemphasize the polysemic nature of media texts and then to exaggerate the degree to which media texts encourage forms of viewers' resistance. They also state that active audience theory tends to improperly privilege audience activity over both the production processes that structure media content and the textual properties of that content.

I agree with Carragee (1996)'s argument that the degree of ideological openness of media texts and the agency of the audience remains an empirical question. Thus, it can be resolved through close readings of the media texts and through careful analyses of audience interpretations of the media messages. This paper explores the patriarchal characteristics of *Bogo Ddo Bogo*, its female viewers' pleasure and interpretations, and their relationship.

III. Research Design and Method

This research was performed for four months from April 1999 to July 1999. In order to understand its textual characteristics, I read all of the scripts of *Bogo Ddo Bogo* on its Internet website (www.mbc.co.kr/drama/see_see) provided by MBC, and watched the program through the videotapes that I rented from a Korean grocery store[8]. I recruited twelve Korean women at the campus town of the University of Massachusetts, located at Amherst. All of them already knew about the program. They had already watched at least some parts of the program through the videotapes rent from the Korean grocery store or through the Internet website, or when they visited Korea for a while. However, I encouraged them to watch the program (again) through the videotapes that I rented from the Korean grocery store, and seven of them did.

All of the twelve Korean women were married in Korea from two to ten years ago[9], and have stayed from one to six years in the United States. They are homemakers, and their husbands are doctorate students or post-doctorate students at the University of Massachusetts. Nine of them have one or two children, and three have no child. The participants possess the similar range of social and educational backgrounds. Although there is some divergence, all participants were brought up in middle-class or upper-middle class families. Ten of them have a diploma degree and two have a M.A. degree. The participants' ages range from 26 to 35. All of them had had their own job in Korea but quit them when they got married or when they came to the U.S. for their husbands' studies. The participants vaguely hope to get a job in the future but generally seem not to have any specific plan or preparation for their future career. Three of them go to institutes to learn English with the hope of being English tutors or English teachers in private educational institutes when they return to Korea. Two of them who were professionals (a pharmacist or a teacher) have plans to return to their jobs when they go back to Korea.

The method of this study is in-depth interviews with the twelve participants. More specifically, this research uses the "interview guide approach." Rossman and Rally (1998) categorize interviews into four types according to how prefigured interviewing is: informal interviews, interview guide approach, standardized open-ended interviews, and dialogic interviews. For them, the interview guide approach is performed in the way in which "the researcher develops categories or topics to explore but remains open to pursuing topics that the participants brings up" (p.124)[10]. Eight interviews were performed at my home where the participants visited alone or with their children. Four interviews were conducted in the participants' own home. The interviews lasted between two hours and two and half-hours. All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed in Korean, but were only partly translated into English for this paper.

IV. Description and Interpretation

A. Pleasure and Reality

Although some (such as Participant 2 and 9) enjoy the comical factors of the drama, the participants seem to take pleasure in *Bogo Ddo Bogo* primarily from its reality as they feel.

> The stories of the drama were not unique. Its dialogues rightly expressed what I usually feel in my real life… The stories were about those events that are always happening around us, and the drama depicted well them so that I could sympathize with them… The stories were not sad or twisted so that I could watch it with a comfortable feeling. Other dramas had such sad and twisted stories but this drama developed even serious topics in a light mood. (Participant 2)

> The drama did not consist of rare stories but of the stories happening in our everyday lives and of the problems faced by any family, so I could enjoy it. It was the conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law that I was especially related to… The stories of other dramas are so far from the real world, and their main characters have such unusual behaviors. They are so unreal. This drama describes people and events that could possibly exist around us. (Participant 3)

> This drama seems to take the content and the background that any person easily understands and the characters that any person easily sympathizes with… The drama made us easily think that such problems (in the drama) could happen in the process of getting married and have our mothers recognize something possibly happening in the process of the marriages of their own daughters… The overall tone of the drama was not serious. There were many funny and interesting characters so that I could watch it comfortably, without thinking seriously. (Participant 9)

> The couple relationship and the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law were interesting. They were such situations in which we might be involved. So they could be the topics that we talked about. (Participant 11)

The participants regard the characters or events in the drama as possibly existing around or happening in their everyday lives. In other words, for the participants, the characters and events in the fictional world of *Bogo Ddo Bogo* are very similar to those that they experience in the real world. *Bogo Ddo Bogo* primarily deals with, at the very concrete and detailed level, everyday important issues for married women, such as the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law, the relationship between a mother and a daughter, the relationship between sisters, children's education, marriage, and domestic violence. In other words, the drama deals with everyday events easily experienced by people (especially women) rather than dramatic events rarely experienced, such as betrayal and revenge based on complex romantic relationships, or tragic accidents and death[11].

Another indication that the participants feel the drama as real is that, while talking about *Bogo Ddo Bogo*, the participants often talk about their own experiences in their everyday life.

> When I saw Eun-Joo in the drama, especially when she fought with her older sister, I often said to myself, "What a same thing!" When I went to University, I lived in my aunt's house. What Eun-Joo did is the same as what my aunt's youngest daughter did… (Participant 1)

> I often wept while watching Kum-Joo's behaviors… She is really the eldest daughter. The mother (Mrs. Bae) seriously preferred the eldest daughter (Kum-Joo) to the younger (Eun-Joo). That happened in my family. I have one younger brother and two younger sisters. When we were children, I was specially treated by adult family members because I was the first child for my father who was the eldest son…. So while I watched the drama, I compared Kum-Joo's behaviors with mine at her age and missed my mother very much… (Participant 5)

> I sometimes recognized that he (Mr. Jung) looked like my father. As my father get old, he seems to feel powerless and have a sense of alienation (Participant 7)

> It is sad to see such a situation (a conflict between Seung-Mi and her mother, Song-Ja, in the drama). I witnessed such cases a lot when I (as a tutor) taught high-school students. Whether students in Kang-Nam[12] can belong to the top class (in terms of grade at school) is decided by how well the mothers organize their children's study time from their early years… If children do not follow the guide of their mothers or resist it, like Seung-Mi, or the mothers' plan is not stable, the children can not belong to the top class. I witnessed many such cases. It is unhappy for both children and parents, because it means wasting a lot of money and time for nothing. This thing should not happen but often happens in our society… This (education of children in Korean social circumstances) is a very difficult issue. It is the issue that I have to face in the future (Participant 8).

The participants' comments about their own experiences imply that they are highly involved in the drama while they experience pleasure from *Bogo Ddo Bogo*. It can be said that the pleasure that the participants take from *Bogo Ddo Bogo* is based on 'experiential realism' rather than 'emotional realism[13]', especially regarding the issues of familial relationships in the drama. Then, what is the ideological role or the political implication of the pleasure that the participants take from *Bogo Ddo Bogo*? For this purpose, this paper explores familial relationships under the Korean social structure because the familial relationships are the main components of the drama narrative, and the participants also talk a lot about the familial relationships in the drama as the major factor that make the drama real.

B. Pleasure and Hegemony: A Korean Woman's life in the Confucian Family Structure

The Chosun Dynasty ruled over Korea for about five hundreds years until Japan colonized Korea in 1910. The Chosun Dynasty took Confucianism, a very strong patriarchal system, as its ruling ideology. Korean Confucianism played a role not only as the philosophy for national politics but also as the principle for people's everyday lives. Since the collapse of the Chosun Dynasty, the power of the Confucian patriarchal system over Korean society has weakened. However, it still strongly works as the dominant system of social and moral rules in Koreans' everyday lives.

It can not be denied that the Korean mass media have been among the most important ideological apparatuses to maintain and reproduce the Confucian patriarchal system in Korean society. They have played a crucial role in prevailing the social atmosphere in which Confucian patriarchal ways of thought and behavior are still the dominant social reality in Korea. As one of the products by such Korean mass media, *Bogo Ddo Bogo* also reflects Confucian patriarchal ideology, and represents, in various ways, Confucian patriarchal ways of thought and behavior. In this part, I reveal several characteristics of Korean Confucian patriarchal system embedded in *Bogo Ddo Bogo*, and explore the female viewers' interpretations of them.

1. Preference of a son to a daughter

One of the characteristics of Korean Confucianism is a very strong system of primogeniture. Under Korean Confucian familial structure, all of the power within family is passed over from the father to sons, especially the eldest son. From birth, sons, especially the eldest son, are given every privilege in their familial life by adult family members. On the contrary, the daughters' familial lives, like these of other female members, are seriously marginalized: the daughters are prevented from participating in official procedures of familial events; they can not often visit their parents' home after marriage; they are even not listed in the genealogy[14] of their own family but in the genealogy of their husbands[15]. This strong system of primogeniture also forces Koreans to strictly preserve their family's own bloodlineage, and plays a role in preventing people from adopting a baby from other families[16]. As a result, it constructs a strong social atmosphere for the preference of a son to a daughter.[17]

The preference of a son to a daughter is still very powerful in Korean society. One of the symptoms for it is that Korean law prevents doctors from informing their patients who are pregnant of the sex of their fetuses because so many people have aborted their female fetuses. New books or new secret ways to teach people how to bear a son have become very popular in Korean society. The Korean mass media represent this way of thought to prefer a son to a daughter as the dominant social reality in various ways.

Bogo Ddo Bogo also presents this 'reality': Song-Ja who has two only daughters is often scolded and maltreated by her husband (Dong-Jae) because she did not produce a son, and Song-Ja does not make any resistance or complaint against such maltreatment by her husband; Song-Ja herself often regrets that she has no son; In their quarrels, Mrs. Bae who considers having a son as her greatest achievement often completely defeats Song-Ja who consider her wealth to be her strongest point; The family of the grooms (Ki-Jung and Ki-Pung) overpowers the family of the bridegrooms (Eun-Joo and Kum-Joo) in the overall process of their marriages; Being described as very active and independent in the early episodes before her marriage, Eun-Joo has a serious agony and considers divorce because she does not bear a child, especially a son. In fact, this represents, in a different way, one of traditional Confucian patriarchal rules that give husbands a right to discard their wives who produce no child, especially a son; The drama uses the dichotomy between Eun-Joo as an angel and Kum-Joo as a devil in terms of women's traditional rules, such as serving parents-in-law, obeying the husband, and doing housework well. And it eventually ends with the result that Eun-Joo bears a son and Kum-Joo bears two daughters. The drama makes the context in which this is happy-ending.

> I can sympathize with Song-Ja's desire for having a son. It is socially constructed. It is our social circumstance. I was not treated badly by my family because I was a daughter. Nevertheless, I often disliked the fact that I was a woman. I often wondered what it would be like if I were a man because there were a lot of social restrictions on women. So when I was pregnant with my first baby, I wanted it to be a son. I thought that I would have only one child in my life, and it would be good to bear a son. I did not like it that I bore a daughter who would live like me because of social restrictions on women. I also recognized that it is the same thing in married life. Everything is managed in a husband-centered way… So, I think, everyone wants a son, don't they?… From birth, a daughter is treated more poorly than a son is. This is the society in which men are privileged. If possible, people want to have a son who will be treated well in a society, don't they? Isn't it natural for women to want to bear sons and to be treated well by family? (Participant 2)

> Most Korean people who do not have a son get such a feeling (as Song-Ja does). It is said (negatively in our society) that the fortune goes to a son-in-law. In other words, they don't consider a son-in-law or a daughter-in-law as their own child at all. I also got pressure to bear a son. And I am also getting pressure right now to have another son. My parents, my husband, and my parents-in-law, all of them want me to bear another son. This pressure can not be avoided when bearing a baby. I also had such an obsession… It is curious that I unconsciously think that my son should successful in his social life more than my daughter. My first child is a boy but he often becomes shy when he is with other people, and tends not to act on his own. On the contrary, my second child is a girl but she plays with toys she makes for herself, and she is more active. It is reversed. Seeing them, I think the boy should be this way and the girl should be another way. I may be worried if the boy does not do well but the girls does better than the boy in terms of adaptation to society or the degree of social success. I seem to have an obsession that my first child should be better than my second child in their social life…Society makes me think in this way. It is like contamination through the air. (Participant 3)

> People implicitly hope to have sons. This may be only my thought because I have sons… Korea is the country that prefers a son to a daughter. Such a thought is embedded in us. [Researcher: why do you think sons are regarded as so important in Korean society?] Because they continue the familial line. Daughters eventually go to another family when they get married. They do not perform a rite at the memorial days of their own parents and ancestors. So, people cry for sons! sons! My mother-in-law told me 'thank you' when I bore a son as the first child. I am curious about what she said if I had had a daughter at that time. When I told a woman that I bore a son as a second child, she said that it would be better for me to bear a daughter as the second child. Because, as he gets older, sons don't understand a mother's mind. It was a daughter that considers and serves a mother. However, all people who say that already have a son. People who have only daughters want to have a son. They do not speak about it but implicitly have such a thought. A visiting scholar had had two daughters but at last came to have a son. He and his wife were very happy for that. In Korea, people cry for a son so seriously. It was even said that women were driven out of their husbands' houses if they could not bear sons… By the way, from my viewpoint, American people also tend to prefer sons… I don't know why? (Participant 4)

> My parents have three daughters. My father is already fifty years old. Nevertheless, when he goes to his hometown, the old people still encourage him to bear a son. [Researcher: why do you think such a thing happen?] Any traditional ritual is conducted by sons. I think that is the most important thing. For example,

> my father said "I want to be cremated after death because there is no one to take care of my grave." He seems to feel a certain anxiety and absence... My husband wanted a son as the first child... (Participant 8)

The participants recognize preference of sons to daughters as the dominant social reality. They have gotten pressure to have sons, especially from husbands, parents-in-law, and their own parents, and have experienced obsessions to bear sons. So the participants sympathize with the desire to have a son of people who have no sons, such as Song-Ja in the drama and people around them in real life.

The participants recognize that preference of a son to a daughter is based on Korean Confucianism. And they criticize the Korean Confucian social structure that encourages this way of thought. However, the participants have a problematic tendency. In the process of explaining Korean Confucianism as the source that provides Korean society with the way of thought to prefer a son to a daughter, the participants (especially Participant 2 and 4) tend to reinforce its value system. The participants dichotomously categorize people as those who have sons and those who have no sons, and conceive that the former is happy and the latter is unhappy. The participants who already have sons seem to be relieved and satisfied with their having sons, and feel pitiful for Song-Ja and people who have no sons. In some sense, they seem to be proud of and even enjoy having sons.

There is another problematic tendency: while they criticize the social atmosphere or other people's tendency to prefer a son to a daughter, they seem to justify their own tendency to prefer a son to a daughter because it is the dominant social reality or because it is forced by outside conditions. However, some participants seem to have voluntarily submitted to this way of thought because of the fear of the pressure that they anticipate, regardless of the real pressure from others. Participants' recognition of the preference of sons to daughters as the dominant social reality seems to play a role in justifying their own tendency to prefer a son to a daughter. In short, while they criticize the way of thought to prefer a son to a daughter at the structural and abstract level, the participants tend to reinforce the way of thought at the concrete and self-involved level, in order not to lose the advantage given by social dominant structure.

2. Mother's Sublime Love for Children and Excessive Attachment to Children's Life

Korean Confucianism is based on the absolutely hierarchical and dichotomous definition of sex roles. Women exist only as supporters or followers for men.[18] Men are tabooed from doing domestic work[19] and women are completely prevented from social activity. Then, the sphere of women's activity is absolutely limited to the domestic area. Especially upper and middle class women were kept from going outside the home except on traditional national holidays.

This living environment for women under the Korean Confucian patriarchal system produces the condition in which married women's concern is focused on their children, especially their sons, articulated with the way of thought to prefer a son to a daughter. Moreover, the Confucian patriarchal system constructs the social atmosphere of mystifying mother's love and sacrifice for children, especially sons. Mother's unconditional and unlimited love and sacrifice for children has been encouraged and worshipped as the most sublime virtue in Korean society. In Korean history, the famous women are respected not for their own social activities but for bringing up sons who made historical contributions to Korean society. This is an ideological logic for Korean Confucianism to justify and reinforce itself. Under the Confucian patriarchal social system, women have no choice but to be eager to see their sons' social success and identify it with their own social success. In addition, raising sons well, sons who will get dominant power over family, may be the only way for women to execute power over the family through their sons' voice. These social and familial conditions force women to stick to their sons' lives in the name of mother's sublime love.

After the introduction of capitalism into Korea and the destruction of the visible Korean caste system, the Korean Confucian patriarchal system has mystified the mother's love for her children in a different way. It imposes on women a 'sublime' duty to do their best to upgrade their children's social and economic status through education and marriage[20]. Dominant Korean social discourses have encouraged mothers' desire and effort for their children's higher education and marriage with people who are in higher social and economic status. The social discourses have valued the desire and effort of mothers as sublime love for children[21]. In order to be good mothers, Korean women should do their best to find the best way for only their own children to survive in tough competition and to upgrade their social and economic status. Articulated with capitalism, the logic of mystifying the mother's love plays a crucial role in constructing strong family egoism and middle-class egoism.

Faithfully following the new Confucian patriarchal logic of mystifying mother's love, *Bogo Ddo Bogo* presents three middle-aged (late 50s') mothers, Mrs. Jee, Song-Ja and Mrs. Bae, and one young mother (30s'), Bong-Heu. The drama demonstrates the mothers' concern for and dedication to their children's education and marriage in order to upgrade their social and economic status: as an upper middle-class homemaker, Mrs. Jee dedicates her life to the social success of her two sons, especially the eldest son, Ki-Jung, who is an attorney. Considering his mother's dedication for him, Ki-Jung is kind and considerate (somewhat obedient) to his mother. However, Mrs. Jee and Ki-Jung have a severely conflicting relationship for a long time because of the issue of Ki-Jung's marriage. Although Ki-Jung takes Eun-Joo as his fiancee, Mrs. Jee severely rejects Eun-Joo primarily because of Eun-Joo's 'poor' economic (lower-class) and social (nurse) status, and forces Ki-Jung to take, as his fiancee, Seung-Mi who comes from upper-class family and is a doctor. Ki-Jung can not easily persuade Mrs. Jee nor ignore her opinion. However, when Ki-Jung is in danger of his life indirectly because of Mrs. Jee's objection to his marriage with Eun-Joo, Mrs. Jee unwillingly accepts Eun-Joo as her eldest-daughter-in-law; as an upper-class homemaker, Song-Ja also does her best for two daughters' education. With her rich economic resources, she makes her eldest daughter a doctor, and has her second daughter study the Cello in Italy. However, every effort of hers eventually fails because her two daughters quit their jobs. Song-Ja conflicts with her eldest daughter, Seung-Mi, who severely criticizes her mother's forceful way of education regardless of her own interest. On the other hand, Song-Ja looks for the best husband for Seung-Mi in terms of social and economic status, and makes efforts to marry her daughter with Ki-Jung but in fail because of Ki-Jung's rejection. Although Seung-Mi takes Myung-Won as her fiancee, Song-Ja severely objects to it and, at last, Seung-Mi withdraws her decision; As a young middle-class homemaker, Bong-Heu seems very liberal and somewhat progressive on some issues. However, she is eager to give her son a better educational environment even through unjust ways. For example, she makes a desperate effort to transfer her son to a better school and bribes her son's teacher.

> While watching the drama, my husband and I agreed to allow our children to get married with whoever they love… However, I think that, if my children take, as their fiance, somebody who is too far from what I expected, I would also dislike it. I may not respect my children's decision one hundred percent in that case. That is a contradiction I have. I do not expect to get any return from my children for my parenthood. Nevertheless, I cannot help having thoughts that I cannot allow my children to marry with a person who, I think, does not deserve my children who I have brought up with all my heart and dedication. So I dislike very much what Mrs. Jee does to her children's marriages on the one hand, and sympathize with it on the other hand. [Researcher: How much do you think the parents have the decision power over their children's marriage?] Just about 20%. If the children's decision is not so wrong, parents should follow the decision of their children. [Researcher: If you think that your children's decision is so wrong, will you object to it to the extent that Mrs. Jee did?] Yes. I may. Such a question gives me agony. I am afraid of facing such a situation in the future. (Participant 3)

> There are a lot of cases (that people give up their marriage because of their parents' objection). [Researcher: If XXX (the eldest son of Participant 5) takes, as his wife, someone who you do not like, what will you do?] I absolutely object to it. For a mother, that is the same as having your child stolen from you. Then, how can I not get mad at such a situation?… First, I will make an effort to like the person who XXX takes. Nevertheless, if I do not like her eventually, I may behave as Mrs. Jee did. Unlike people in the movies, real people do not get married without the permission of their parents. Even after setting the date for our engagement ceremony, my husband intentionally complained against me in front of his parents in order to test his parents' opinion on me. People consider their parents' opinion to such a degree… [Why are parents given such a powerful right to decide their children's life in Korea?] Korean parents are eager to make their children what the parents wanted to be but could not accomplish. The children are like the puppets of their parents…. They seem to want a return for their investment in their children. [Researcher: Right before, you said that you might object to your child's decision. Is that based on such a wish?] It may be… It is a very difficult question. (Participant 5)

> Ki-Jung's mother seems to solve her inner pressure through Ki-Jung. Her inner pressure comes from leading such a restricted life only at home, serving her mother-in-law, and having hope only for her sons' success. I cannot sympathize with her way of thinking. She should not interfere with her child's life to such a serious extent… [Researcher: Do you think that there are people who give up their marriage with someone because of their parents' objection] Although I have not witnessed it, I have heard that kind of story a lot… [Researcher: If your children take, as their fiances, someone who is too far from what you expect, what will you do?] Then, I will get even madder than Ki-Jung's mother did. ! will seriously feel that my children have betrayed me… I also sympathize with the character Won-Suk Park plays (Song-Ja)… It (a mother's love for her children) seems like instinct… (Participant 9)

> [Researcher: do you think that parents have the right to decide the fiances of their children?] No. Mrs. Jee should not have acted like that. However, my husband said that I had high possibility of doing that. [If XXX (the son of Participant 12) takes, as his wife, somebody who is too far from what you expected, what will you do?] I have certain expectations, I have educated him and brought up him. Nevertheless, if he takes a person who is far from my expectations, I will be very disappointed with my son more than with the female partner he takes. I may declare to my son that he is not my son any more. So I think that Mrs. Jee gets so mad and behaves like that because of her disappointment with her son. I can sympathize with Mrs. Jee. (Participant 12)

The participants seem to have dual positions on the issue of a mother's love for her children and over-attachment to their children's lives. While they criticize Mrs. Jee's behaviors related to the issue of Ki-Jung's marriage and Song-Ja's forceful way of educating their children at the ideal and abstract level, the participants tend to sympathize with and support, at the practical and concrete level, Mrs. Jee's and Song-Ja's thoughts and behaviors. Especially, when they relate these issues in the relation to their own children, the participants strongly sympathize with the characters' thoughts and behaviors. For example, while they criticize Mrs. Jee for not respecting Ki-Jung's choice of wife and for adhering to her own criteria for choosing her son's wife, the participants reveal that they will insist on their criteria for their children's fiances as strongly as or more strongly than Mrs. Jee does in the drama.

Although some participants (such as Participant 3) recognize the contradiction of their thoughts, most of the participants seem not to recognize the contradiction. In other words, most participants unconsciously take a dual attitude to the same issue according to whose problem it is, theirs or someone else's. However, whether recognizing the contradiction or not, the participants tend to regard the thoughts and behaviors that Mrs. Jee and Song-Ja demonstrate in the drama as a mother's love for her children based on a mother's instinct for the purpose of her children's happy lives. For them, Mrs. Jee's and Song-Ja's thoughts and behaviors are improper but are based on the dominant social reality. The participants tend to naturalize and justify their thoughts and behaviors that are the same as Mrs. Jee's and Song-Ja's.

Another indication of this tendency of participants is their responses regarding Bong-Heu who is the closest female character to the participants in terms of their own age and their children's age. The participants primarily interpret Bong-Heu's thoughts and behaviors as positively. The participants describe Bong-Heu as a "not special," "realistic," or "wise" type of young mother. In other word, Bong-Heu seems like a young mother living around the participants, and her ways of thinking and behaving regarding her child are realistic and wise. The participants tend to naturalize and justify Bong-Heu's way of thinking and simultaneously their own ways of thinking because they are based on the dominant social reality. In this context, the reality of *Bogo Ddo Bogo* that the participants feel seems to encourage the sympathy of the participants with Mrs. Jee's, Song-Ja's and Bong-Heu's ways of thinking and behaving as the dominant social reality. Then, it seems to provide the basis to justify and reinforce the myth of the mother's love for her children based on the Confucian patriarchal system.

3. Relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law

In return for the privilege given by adult family members, sons (especially the eldest son) have the duty to keep the familial line and culture, to serve on their parents, and to support their large family. However, it is not the sons but their wives that practically fulfill this duty. Daughters-in-law (especially the eldest daughters-in-law) should bear sons to keep their husbands' familial line, live together with and serve their parents-in-law until their death, and perform every labor for their husbands' familial events. However, daughters-in-law are prevented from participating in official procedures of familial events and from deciding any significant familial matters, except things related to household work. In short, the Korean Confucian family structure severely marginalizes daughters-in-law's familial life, although it requires them to dedicate their life for the family.

One of the crucial mechanisms of the Korean Confucian patriarchal system to conceal this contradiction of the familial life of daughters-in-law is to make female family members struggle against each other within the patriarchal domestic space[22]. The relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is a representative case. This mechanism works well through interrelating with preference of sons to daughters and the mystification of a mothers' love as argued above. In other words, the Confucian patriarchal system makes mothers prefer sons to daughters, and dedicate their lives for their sons. As the return of their dedication to her son, a mothers implicitly try to control her son who will eventually the head of the family. However, in the real family structure, the mother primarily gets rewarded not from her son, but from her daughter-in-law. Articulated with a strict hierarchical relationship between the old and the young based on Confucianism, the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is absolutely hierarchical. A mother-in-law has complete power over a daughter-in-law, and the latter should be completely obedient to the former. In fact, the relationship between a father-in-law and a daughter-in-law also has the same characteristics. However, the Korean dominant social discourses have focused only on the relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. Many traditional literature works and folk-tales deal with the conflict relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law: a 'devil' mother-in-law (or sometimes a 'devil' sister-in-law) severely maltreats an 'angel' daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law endures the unjust and hard situation by herself. The dedicated efforts of the daughter-in-law eventually move the mother-in-law, and then they reconcile with each other. In this process, the male family members, a husband and a father-in-law, mainly keep the position of objective observers or passive negotiators of the conflict, although they take the side of the daughter-in-law in a indirect way. However, the male members execute their power, in a critical moment, to finish the conflict. This kind of story emphasizes a daughter-in-law's obedience to parents-in-law and sacrifice for the family's happiness. It also demonstrates that women are their own worst enemies in the Korean familial life; men are objective, reasonable and moral, while women are selfish, emotional, and irrational and should be controlled by the men. In other words, emphasizing the conflicting relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law as the dominant social reality plays a crucial role in justifying and reinforcing the Korean patriarchal family system. Many Korean television dramas including *Bogo Ddo Bogo* have taken as their main story the conflicting relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. Although they sometimes deal with the reverse conflicting relationship between an 'angel' mother-in-law and a 'devil' or 'sagacious' daughter-in-law, Korean television dramas have faithfully followed the narrative structure of the traditional literature works and folk-tales.

The primary narrative of *Bogo Ddo Bogo* is also about the conflicting relationship between mother-in-laws and daughters-in-law. After their marriage, Ki-Jung and Eun-Joo live together with Ki-Jung's grandmother and Ki-Jung's parents (Mr. Park and Mrs. Jee[23]). So there are two mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships, the grandmother/Mrs. Jee and Mrs. Jee/Eun-Joo. *Bogo Ddo Bogo* describes these relationships as continually conflicting and as a kind of prey chain: The grandmother dominates over Mrs. Jee, and Mrs. Jee controls Eun-Joo's social and domestic activities. Although they are different in a style, the two mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships are the same in that the mothers-in-law make demands of and scold the daughters-in-law often in an unreasonable way. The daughters-in-law faithfully endure the irrational maltreatment of the mothers-in-law, although Mrs. Jee sometimes complaints about the grandmother to her husband and her sister-in-law. Mr. Park and Ki-Jung tend to intentionally ignore the conflict and to remain in the middle position as objective observers. However, Mr. Park plays a role as a passive negotiator for some (domestic) issues that cause severe conflicts between his mother (the grandmother) and his wife (Mrs. Jee), and for his wife's severe maltreatment of his daughter-in-law (Eun-Joo). Ki-Jung also plays a critical role in changing his mother's (Mrs. Jee) attitude towards his wife (Eun-Joo) and in making a good relationship between them. In this process, while the women are problematized as selfish, emotional, and irrational, the men are valued as objective, reasonable, and moral.

The relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is a everyday important issue for married Korean women. As shown above, most participants mention this relationship as the major component of the drama which makes them keep watching the drama and feel it to be real.

> The conflict between the grandmother and Mrs. Jee comes from the dissimilarity in personality. The relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is very difficult. They should continually make efforts for constructing and keeping a good relationship. In the case of the relationship between Mrs. Jee and Eun-Joo, since Mrs. Jee does not trust Eun-Joo, Eun-Joo has a rare chance to recover her image. The prejudice (of Mrs. Jee against Eun-Joo) is the basis of their conflict. (Participant 7)

> In case of the relationship between the grandmother and Mrs. Jee, Mrs. Jee did almost all of the household work, but the grandmother was not satisfied with that... Then the grandmother bothered Mrs. Jee and Mrs. Jee continued to have difficulty with her mother-in-law... The conflict between Eun-Joo and Mrs. Jee comes from their misunderstanding of each other based on the dissimilarity in personality. It was also based on the condition in which three generations lived together. The grandmother and Eun-Joo got along and the grandmother had power. Mrs. Jee who should have had power was entirely isolated and alienated. Then if I were Eun-Joo's mother-in-law, I would also hate Eun-Joo. [Researcher: So, do you think the conflicts came basically from the dissimilarity in personality?] Yes. [Researcher: Then, do you think that the dissimilarity in personality is able to explain the conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law in general in Korea?] That seems to be explained in this way. The basic reason in which such a relationship happens is that the parents dedicate their lives to their son or children, and then they expect too much from their children. So the unhealthy relationship is formed. The parents seem to think that "I dedicate my life to bringing you up in such a dedicate way. How can you with your wife treat me in this way?" I think it is natural for the parents to say that. (Participant 8)

> The grandmother asserts strongly herself. Mrs. Jee and Eun-Joo also assert themselves. So they conflict with each other... Conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law exist in the U.S.. However the conflict in the U.S. is less than that in Korea... A daughter-in-law is a slave in Korea. She has to do all physical work. So the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law in Korea is the hierarchical relationship between a master and a servant. The conflict in the U.S. is based on equal relationships. A daughter-in-law does not have to work in the kitchen all day when she is in the house of a mother-in-law, and a mother-in-law does not think that she should be served by her a daughter-in-law. I understand the drama much from this perspective. The mother-in-law (the grandmother) always requires things from her daughter-in-law (Mrs. Jee)... [Researcher: why do you think this happens in Korea?] I think that it is because of Confucianism. The older should take a rest and the young should work... (Participant 10)

> I think it is just the course of living. The grandmother tended not to consider the position of her daughter-in-law at all, and Mrs. Jee lacked in making up to the grandmother… [Researcher: Then, how about the relationship between Mrs. Jee and Eun-Joo?] If Mrs. Jee thought in a better way, they could reconcile with each other earlier. And Eun-Joo should have also thought more from the viewpoint of her mother-in-law. It is three-step-relation (the grandmother/Mrs. Jee/Eun-Joo). However, Eun-Joo did everything that her grandmother-in-law wanted, and then her mother-in-law could not find her own place. So the mother-in-law (Mrs. Jee) seem to have harder time and to hate Eun-Joo more. (Participant 11)

The participants tend to regard the conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law as natural and inevitable rather than as constructed by social conditions. For them, it is just one component in a women's life. Some participants (such as Participant 8 and 10) recognize that the conflict relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is a social structural problem based on Confucianism. However, none of the participants interpret the conflict relationship between the grandmother and Mrs. Jee and between Mrs. Jee and Eun-Joo as based on the Korean Confucian social structure. Rather, they tend to interpret it in terms of dissimilarity in personality or power struggles among women over domestic issues. In other words, while they recognize it, at the general and abstract level, as the problem of Korean social structure, the participants understand the conflict relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law, at the specific and concrete level, as the problem of individuals, such as problematic personalities of a mother-in-law or daughter-in-law. The participants also tend to solve the problem of a mother-in-law/a daughter-in-law relationship through individual efforts such as the obedience of a daughter-in-law (Mrs. Jee or Eun-Joo) to a mother-in-law (the grandmother or the Mrs. Jee) or the humanistic or moral recognition of a mother-in-law (Mrs. Jee).

The participants seem to naturalize the obedience of a daughter-in-law as a moral virtue. They tend to set some traits, such as obedience to and sacrifice for husband's family, as a pre-requirement in order to become a daughter-in-law, especially the eldest daughter-in-law.

> [Researcher: why was Seung-Mi rejected as Ki-Jung's wife by Ki-Jung and his grandmother?] Because they think that Seung-Mi respects only her study and herself, and she doesn't know the duty of a daughter-in-law such as serving parents-in-law and respecting them. [Researcher: then, what do you think about their thoughts?] Seung-Mi has such a tendency. (Participant 2)

> I think that there are qualifications for the eldest daughter-in-law. First of all, the eldest daughter-in-law should be broad-minded because she has to deal with every big event of the family and to consider other people and family members rather than herself. She should be willing to sacrifice herself for other people. Eun-Joo may become a good eldest daughter-in-law. She did not tell her husband about what she experienced even when she was enduring such a hard time. (Participant 3)

> If she (Eun-Joo) made up to her mother-in-law more actively, her relationship with her mother-in-law could be better. However, she did not. Although the behaviors of Eun-Joo was natural, she could simply change it by changing her mind. I don't understand why she did not… (Participant 6)

> Mrs. Jee is just a typical eldest daughter-in-law who silently works hard like an ox and rarely expresses herself. She is not talkative, serves what her mother-in-law wants, does housework, and does not make a complaint… Eun-Joo has many traits the older people dislike. She is blunt and says everything that she

> wants and behaves without considering others in order to secure what she want… If I were her mother-in-law, I would not like her. (Participant 7)

The fact that the participants emphasize and naturalize a daughter-in-law's obedience as the solution for the conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is interrelated with the fact that they recognized the conflict as caused by individual problems. An interesting thing is that, when they talk about the issue of the conflict relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law, the participants seem to speak out not from their current position as a daughter-in-law but from their future position as a mother-in-law. The participants tend to regard the hierarchical relationship as a dominant and unchangeable reality, and seem to be prepared for enjoying their future power over their future daughters-in-law as Participant 7 implies. This tendency might also be read in participants' passive attitude to the change in the hierarchical relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. Their expectation for the change of the relationship is very abstract and obscure. The participants tend not to include them as the subject for changing such a structure. Their attitude is just like "as time goes, a change comes". This is the logic that makes the Korean social consensus, "the enemy of women is women", and forces women to reinforce the patriarchal system by themselves.

Another important tendency of the participants is to regard male family members (husbands or fathers-in-law) as victims of the conflicting relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters in-law.

> Mr. Park played a good role as a mediator between his mother and his wife… The most impressive scene was when he made an effort to prevent conflict when his mother wanted to eat Mandus (Korean dumplings) and his wife did not want to make it. (Participant 4)

> However good a marriage relationship is, it will not be good if the relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law is not good… If the husband cannot solve the conflict between his parents and his wife, it becomes a serious problem for the family… The husband cannot easily find a good place. I saw a married couple get divorced because of conflict between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law… Schoolmaster Park played a somewhat good role… (Participant 6)

> As a husband, he (Mr. Park) is in a difficult position… between the talkative mother and the hardworking wife… (Participant 7)

> Schoolmaster Park is placed tightly between his mother and his wife. He seems to cope with this situation well… He treats his mother well, and is very kind and considerate to his wife because she waits on his mother well. He keeps a middle position in order not to cause conflict… (Participant 11)

That the participants regard the men as the victims is also related to the fact that they understand the conflict between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law as based on individual problems, not on the Korean patriarchal family structure. In this process, women are problematized as troublemakers in family life and men are valued as objective, reasonable, and moral negotiators to solve the trouble. This reinforces the dominant social conscience, "respect men and degrade women", based on the Confucian patriarchal system. As a result, the conflicting relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is the product of the Confucian patriarchal system, and plays a role in reinforcing the system[24].

Conclusion and Discussion

The participants of my research seem to take the pleasure from *Bogo Ddo Bogo* primarily because of its reality. For the participants, *Bogo Ddo Bogo* represents what they experience in their everyday life. So the participants seem to be involved in the drama. Their pleasure seems to be based primarily on "experiential realism" rather than "emotional realism". The primary pleasure that the participants take from *Bogo Ddo Bogo* seems "hegemonic (complicit) pleasure[25]" rather than "resistant pleasure[26]". The participants feel enjoyment while reinforcing the dominant meaning system of the drama based on the dominant Korean cultures, especially the Korean Confucian patriarchal culture, rather than while resisting the dominant meaning system of the drama. Although they tend to criticize the Confucian patriarchal system at the general and abstract level, they accept and sometimes internalize the system at the concrete and self-involved level. For them, the system is the dominant social reality that they can not compete with but should submit to. In other words, the pleasure that the participants take from *Bogo Ddo Bogo* has somewhat resistant characteristics at the general and abstract level but is overwhelmingly complicit pleasure at the concrete and self-involved level. In this process, *Bogo Ddo Bogo* plays a role in reinforcing the Korean Confucian patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving as the dominant social reality, and then in providing the participants with the chance to justify and reinforce, at the level of everyday life, their existing ways of thinking and behaving confirming the Korean Confucian patriarchal system.

Here, we can consider participants' ways of thinking in terms of the Korean middle-class egoism, especially their family egoism; Korean middle-class people recognize and criticize, at the general and abstract level, the problems and contradictions of the Korean Confucian capitalist social structure. However, at the practical and self-involved level, they accept and support the social structure. They rarely stand on the forefront of changing the social structure, for they do not want to take a risk of their vested interests privileged by the dominant social system. As middle-class or upper-middle class people, the participants of my research criticize the Confucian social structure at the general level, but, at the concrete and self-involved level, they attach to maintain and enlarge their existing privileges and these of their family granted by the Confucian social structure articulated with the capitalist system. Then, they practically reinforce the Korean Confucian patriarchal social structure which disadvantages women themselves.

Notes

1. *Bogo Ddo Bogo*'s main story is about a double wedding between two sisters and two brothers which is not illegal but is traditionally taboo in Korean society. The title indicates the situation in which the two families see each other at least two times for their children's double wedding.

2. Another indicator of *Bogo Ddo Bogo's* popularity is that during the period when *Bogo Ddo Bogo* was aired, its following time slot, *MBC News Desk*, defeated its rival program, *9 o'clock KBS News* in viewing rating. It was a very rare case in the rating competition between the two representative Korean news programs because *9 o'clock KBS News* had defeated *MBC News Desk* for a long time and often had high ratings despite the fact that other Korean news programs were generally struggling with their low rating. Media critics estimated that the popularity of *Bogo Ddo Bogo* made it possible. In fact, after *Bogo Ddo Bogo* went off the air, *9 o'clock KBS News* returned to outperform *MBC News Desk* in the rating.

3. For example, Hankyreh-Sinmun, November 22, 1998.

4. I watched *Bogo Ddo Bogo* through the videotapes that I rented from a Korean grocery store, and read the scripts of the program on the website provided by MBC.

5. See the part of ' Description and Interpretation' in this paper for the more details of the patriarchal characteristics of *Bogo Ddo Bogo*.

6. Bielby and Harrington (1994: 83) define agency as the ability of socially embedded individuals to initiate and control behavior. For them, the agency of audience seems to refer to the audience members' ability to generate their own meanings, regardless of the relationship of the meanings to hegemonic meanings and values. Otherwise, Mckinley (1997: 251-252) defines agency as a challenge of the status quo, especially a discursive challenge. Thus, for her, the agency of audience implies the audience's power to generate meanings resistant to hegemonic meanings and values. In this writing, I follow Mckinley's definition.

7. See Condit (1994)

8. I rent 54 videotapes covering 214 episodes of the program.

9. They are called 'new generation couples' in dominant Korean discourses.

10. Through watching the videotapes of *Bogo Ddo Bogo* and reading its scripts on the website, I identified a few broad topics that were treated as major issues in the drama and would help uncover the participants' interpretations of *Bogo Ddo Bogo*, especially in terms of their perspectives on the dominant (especially Korean Confucian patriarchal) meanings and values embedded in the program: 1) pleasure that the participants take from the drama, 2) characteristics of each main character, 3) the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law, 4) the relationship between parents and children, 5) the marriage relationship, 6) preference of a son to a daughter, 7) the role of the eldest son and his wife in a large Korean family, 8) gender roles in a domestic and social sphere, and 9) work and marriage for women. I made about a 20 minute long videotape edited with two or three clips of the show related to each broad topic. I showed the related clips the participants when I asked questions about each broad topic in the interview. This

was not only for helping me to deal with all of the broad topics in the interview but also for helping the participants to recall their thoughts and feelings when they watched the show. However, I did not set the specific questions for the interviews but asked spontaneous questions within the broad topics. I also did not stick only to the broad topics that I already set, but tried to keep the flow of the conversations and to respect how the participants frame and structure responses.

11. *Bogo Ddo Bogo* also has many other factors that make the viewers feel it is real. It uses time in ways that parallel actual time except the last part. It often includes current social and cultural issues, such as the collapse of the Korean economic system (IMF Crisis), the North Korea issue, the bribing of teachers by parents, violence in school, the overheating social atmosphere for children's private education, and the conflict between the old and the young about fashion. It also often uses currently prevailing humor and popular jokes.

12. Kang-Nam is one of the areas of Seoul. It represents the area of rich people. Based on the education background-centered Korean social structure and their financial power, the parents living in Kang-Nam are famous for their desperate efforts (especially through employing expensive tutors) to educate their children in order to get their children into prestigious universities.

13. See Ang (1985), pp. 13-50

14. In Korean society, the genealogy is very important because it indicates their social status. It played a role in maintaining the Korean caste system.

15. This conventional genealogical system is also legally legitimated by the current Korean family registration system. For example, when there is no adult male family member, a male baby, not its grandmother or mother, is listed as the head of the family. And when they get married, the daughters are erased from the family register and are listed in the family register of their husbands.

16. This is why Korea, despite its economic development, is still notorious for being one of the major countries to export babies abroad for adoption.

17. This system also provides a crucial basis for Korean familial egoism. They accept, as a family member, only somebody who is related with blood line. In this culture, Korean rarely adopt children. When Koreans did not have a child, they usually adopted their brother's child. This became the way to strictly maintain the Korean caste system and patrimony. This is why Koreans rarely return their personal property to society and why Korean family egoism is so strong.

18. There is a Korean proverb, " (in order to enjoy her happiest life), a woman should faithfully follow what her father say when she is a child, what her husband say after she gets married, and what her son say when she gets old."

19. From their childhood, Korean men are scolded even for simply entering the kitchen.

20. It can be said that this is a progress because at least there is no distinction between sons and daughters for this issue. However, as I will discuss later, there is a powerful assumption that a woman's life almost completely depends on whom she marries.

21. Korean mass media have reported on these social issues in a critical tone on the one hand, and yet reinforce this phenomenon as dominant social reality on the other hand. In their critiques, their major target is not the social structure based on Confucian patriarchal thought but women. Women who are the major victim of the Korean patriarchal social system become major social troublemakers. This is the logic for the current Korean Confucian patriarchal system to maintain their system.

22. Another crucial mechanism is to construct social consensus which moralizes and virtualizes women's unconditional sacrifice for family and women's unlimited endurance in any difficult and unjust situation. For example, there were seven socially accepted items that gave husbands the right to discard their wife: 1. disobedience to parents-in-law, 2. Inability to bear a child (especially a son), 3. lust 4. jealousy of other wives of a husband (Korea was polygamic society), 5. having a serious disease, 6. talkativeness, 7. stealing. However, married women had no right to discard their husband in any situation.

23. In Korea, a married woman does not take her husband's last name but keeps her father's last name.

24. There are many social problems that follow this logic. For example, educational background-centered social structure is based on Korean Confucianism to make a strict dichotomous and hierarchical definition of mental work and labor work. However, dominant social discourses focus on criticizing the mother's over-anxious desire for the education of their children. Another example is the dominant social discourses' critique of women's conspicuous consumption.

25. See Mercer (1986)

26. See Fiske (1987, 1989)

References

Ang, I. (1990). Culture and Communication. *European Journal of Communications*, 5 (2/3): 239-61.

Ang, I. (1985). *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodrama Imagination.* Trans. By D. Couling. New York: Methuen.

Baym, N. (1995). The Emergence of Community in Computer-Mediated Communication. In S. Jones (ed), *CyberSociety: Computer-Mediated Communicated Communication and Community*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 138-163.

Bielby, D. & Harrington, C. (1994). Reach out and touch someone: Viewers, Agency, and Audiences in the televisual experience. In J. Cruz & J. Lewis (eds.), *Viewing, Reading, Listening: Audiences and Cultural Reception.* Boulder: Westview Press, 19-32.

Brown, M. (1994) *Soap Opera and Women's Talk: The Pleasure of Resistance.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Brown, M. (ed.) (1990). Television and women's culture: the politics of the popular. London: Sage

Carragee, K. (1996). Critical ethnographies and the concept of resistance. In M. Morgan and S. Leggett (Eds.), *Mainstream(s) and Margins: Cultural Politics in the 90s.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 126-142.

Carragee, K. (1990). Interpretive media studies and interpretive social science. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 7*, 81-96.

Condit, C. (1994). Hegemony in a mass-mediated society: Concordance about reproductive technologies. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 11 (3): 205-30

Condit, C. (1989). The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6:103-122.

D'Acci, J. (1994). *Defining Women: Television and The Case of Cagney & Lacey.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Fiske, J. (1987). *Television Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Fiske, J. (1989). Productive Pleasures. In *Understanding Popular Culture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 49-68.

Gray, A. (1987). Reading the Audience. *Screen*, 28(3): 25-34.

Hall, S. (1993). 'Reflections upon the encoding/decoding model: an interview with Stuart Hall', in J. Cruze and J. Lewis (eds.), *Viewing, reading, listening: Audiences and cultural reception*, Boulder: Westview Press, 253-74.

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall et al (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Hutchinson,128-138.

Hiede, M. (1995). *Television Culture and Women's Lives: Thirtysomething and the Contradictions of Gender*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hobson, D. (1982). *Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera*. New York: Methuen.

Jenkins, H. (1995). Out of the Closet and into the Universe. In J. Tulloch & H. Jenkins (eds.) *Science Fiction Audiences*. New York: Routledge, 239-265.

Jenkins, H. (1992). *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*.

Jenkins, H. (1988). *Star Trek* Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2: 85-107.

Jhally, S. & Lewis, J. (1992). *Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences, and the Myth of the American Dream*. San Francisco: Westview Press.

Lewis, J. (1994). The meaning of things: Audiences, ambiguity, and power. In *Viewing, Reading, Listening: Audiences and Cultural Reception*. Boulder: Westview Press, 19-32.

Lewis, J. (1991). *The Ideological Octopus: An Exploration of Television & its Audience*. New York: Routledge.

McKinley, G. (1997). *Beverly Hills, 90210: Television, Gender, and Identity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mercer, C. (1986). Complicit Pleasure. In T. Bennett et al (eds.), *Popular Culture and Social Relation*. London: Open University Press.

Morley, D. (1996). Populism, Revisionism and the 'New' Audience Research. In J. Curran, D. Morley, & Walkerdine (eds.), *Cultural Studies and Communications*. New York: Routledge, 279-293.

Morley, D. (1993). Active Audience Theory: Pendulums and Pitfalls. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4): 13-19

Myers, D. (1987a). A New Environment for Communication Play: On-line Play. In G. Fine (ed.), *Meaningful Play, Playful Meaning*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.

Myers, D. (1987b). Anonymity is Part of the Magic: Individual Manipulation of Computer-Mediated Communication Contexts. *Qualitative Sociology*, 19(3): 251-266
Morley, D. (1992). *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.

O'Shea, A. (1989). Television as culture: More than just text and readers. *Media, Culture and Society, 11*, 373-379.

Press, A. (1991). *Women Watching Television: Gender, Class, and Generation in the American Television Experience*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Reid, E. (1991). *Electropolis: Communication and Community On Internet Relay Chat*. Electronic Document.

Schroder, M. (1987). Convergence of antagonistic traditions? *European Journal of Communication*, 2, 7-31.

Shudson, M. (1987) The new validation of popular culture: Sense and sentimentality in academia. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 4*, 51-68.